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New York

President:	Miss Durrant	(Jamaica)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Listre
	Bangladesh	Mr. Chowdhury
	Canada	Mr. Fowler
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Malaysia	Mr. Hasmy
	Mali	Mr. Ag Oumar
	Namibia	Mr. Andjaba
	Netherlands	Mr. Hamer
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Tunisia	Mr. Jerandi
	Ukraine	Mr. Krokhmal
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 1261 (1999) on children and armed conflict (S/2000/712)

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00-55266 (E)

The meeting resumed at 3.20 p.m.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Sudan, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Rahmtalla (Sudan), took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council chamber.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Austria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): Thank you, Madam, for permitting me to address the Council in Austria's capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in order to make a few remarks on the efforts to raise the issue of children and armed conflict in the OSCE.

Permit me at the outset to thank the Jamaican presidency for scheduling this important debate and for your leadership, Madam, on this issue.

I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for their introduction of the report of the Secretary-General. The report contains rich information on ongoing activities and thinking on the protection of children in armed conflict. Its many recommendations are most useful, not only for the future work of the Security Council and the United Nations, but also for regional organizations such as the OSCE.

On behalf of the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, the Austrian Foreign Minister, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, I would like to use this opportunity to pay tribute to the decisive role of Mr. Olara Otunnu in advocating and recommending concrete action by the OSCE. In the course of the past 10 months, he twice addressed important OSCE forums on the protection of children in armed conflict. I would also like to acknowledge the important contribution of UNICEF to the deliberations of the OSCE and express the interest that Ms. Carol Bellamy will participate in an OSCE meeting devoted to this issue in the near future. It is our hope that the OSCE and UNICEF will develop close partnerships and collaboration in the field. This could also contribute to the preparations for next year's special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the World Summit for Children.

At the Istanbul OSCE Summit in November 1999, the heads of State or Government of the participating States of the OSCE committed themselves to actively promoting children's rights and interests, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations, to regularly addressing the rights of children in the work of the OSCE and to paying particular attention to the physical and psychological well-being of children involved in or affected by armed conflict. In the Charter for European Security, signed at the Summit by heads of State or Government, participating States express the will to develop and implement measures to promote the rights and interests of children in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, including refugees and internally displaced children, and to look at ways of preventing forced or compulsory recruitment for use in armed conflict of persons under 18 years of age.

As a consequence, this year's Human Dimension Seminar of the OSCE, held in May in Warsaw, was specifically devoted to the topic of children and armed conflict in order to identify ways for the organization to improve its protection framework for children and to develop concrete policies and actions, in particular for OSCE field operations. The Seminar was attended by representatives of 47 participating States of the OSCE, of international organizations and non-governmental organizations, as well as of OSCE institutions and field operations. For the first time in OSCE human dimension events, the Seminar was conducted in an interdimensional way, associating politico-military topics and politico-military experts with its proceedings, allowing for a useful dialogue between the human-rights perspective and the politico-military aspects of the issue of children and armed conflict.

A comprehensive report of the Seminar has been published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. The main recommendations of the Seminar can be summarized as follows.

The OSCE and its participating States should ensure full respect for and implementation of international standards and instruments for the protection of children, in particular in conflict situations.

The OSCE should integrate the protection of the rights of the child, in particular of children affected by armed conflict, into its activities and continue and enhance cooperation and coordination with other international organizations, national institutions and non-governmental organizations, both at the political level at headquarters and at the practical level in the field. To this end, the Seminar recommended in particular the following measures: the development of OSCE policies and actions for the protection of children affected by armed conflict; the designation of focal points on children affected by armed conflict, including in relevant field operations; the monitoring and reporting on the protection of the rights of the child in armed conflict situations by OSCE field operations; the strengthening of OSCE expertise and capacities in this area, including in its Rapid Expert Assistance and Cooperation Teams; and the inclusion of the rights of the child in training programmes for members of OSCE field operations. OSCE bodies, in particular the Chairman-in-Office, the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Cooperation, as well as OSCE institutions, should regularly address the rights of the child, in particular of children affected by armed conflict; and the Forum for Security Cooperation should continue its efforts in developing concrete measures to stem the illegal flow of small arms and light weapons in the OSCE area and to include children's issues in the planned OSCE document on these matters.

Two major initiatives are being pursued to follow up on these recommendations. First, the Austrian Chairperson-in-Office has already requested OSCE field operations, as well as Secretariat units, to pay more systematic attention to the protection of children affected by armed conflict and to integrate the issue into their work. This includes the provision of human rights officers of field operations with checklists on children's issues in order to stimulate awareness, action and reporting, the inclusion of the rights of the child in mission members induction courses or, for example, in the curriculum of the OSCE Kosovo Police Service School.

Secondly, a broad consensus emerged from the Human Dimensions Seminar that the OSCE should develop a comprehensive document outlining OSCE policies and actions for the protection of children, with special emphasis on those affected by armed conflict. A first orientation discussion was held recently, and negotiations will continue with a view to formally adopting such an OSCE document at the next meeting of the OSCS Ministerial Council, in November in Vienna.

The Austrian Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE will continue to work for the implementation of the recommendations of the Seminar and undertake further steps to develop and improve concrete policies and measures to benefit children in conflict situations as well as in potential and post-conflict situations. The next Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Romania, has expressed its intention to continue these efforts.

It is clear that the OSCE and its field operations do not have the means to effectively address all the assistance and protection needs of children affected by armed conflict in the OSCE region. The OSCE therefore seeks to build and intensify partnerships with others: international organizations, non-governmental organizations and local initiatives. We are looking at the United Nations and its agencies as key partners, with long-standing experience and unique expertise in these matters. Let us together make a concerted effort to effectively address and thus to prevent the serious impact of armed conflict on children.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Colombia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Franco (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to express my thanks to you, Madam President, for the initiative you have taken in convening this meeting. My thanks also go to the Secretary-General for the report he submitted to the Council.

I am taking part in the discussion to offer some very specific ideas relating to the way in which the Security Council has handled the item before us today. This year the Arria formula was used to permit participation by non-governmental organizations at a meeting with the members of the Security Council, during which the item now before us was discussed. I would like to underscore above all the important role

played by non-governmental organizations in this field. However, we have some procedural points that we would like to make.

Nowadays, thanks to intensive discussion in the Open-ended Working Group on the Reform of the Security Council, it has become plain that the use and interpretation of the Arria formula continues to give rise to disagreements among Member States. Following yesterday's meeting it is probable that these differences will become even more accentuated.

As we have been able to understand it, the new Arria formula applied by the Security Council consists in a process of confidential and informal consultations without official records, permitting members of the Security Council to hear views and obtain and exchange information with non-governmental organizations working on issues that the Council, by an expansive process of absorption, has decided to adopt as being within its purview. Nevertheless, it is a further example of the way in which Member States that do not belong to the Security Council are deprived of the opportunity to participate in the discussion, negotiation and further development of items peculiar to the General Assembly.

The implementation and use of this new Arria formula pose general questions for the work of the United Nations. For example, will this be the beginning of the end of the mechanisms for the acceptance and consideration of non-governmental organizations, such as the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations? To whom will the non-governmental organizations participating in future meetings under the new Arria formula be accountable? Why was it not disclosed in advance which organizations would be participating in the new Arria formula meeting? According to what criteria were they selected? Are there impediments for these organizations if they wish to address Member States in an open-ended format? Were they dealing with confidential issues that warranted such a closed meeting?

We value the report of the Secretary-General, as we have already noted, in particular section IV, on integrating the protection of children in peacekeeping operations, and section V, on post-conflict issues, which seem to be the most relevant to the natural purview of the Security Council's action. In this regard, the Council might be more appropriate than the General Assembly when it comes to achieving tangible results in these fields. Likewise, we recognize the important work of the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. At the same time, we note the outstanding work being done by UNICEF.

I think we could ask ourselves how effective the Security Council has been in handling this issue. It is difficult to identify management indicators whereby this could be established. The fact is that today, while we are discussing this issue in the abstract, many concrete events are taking place in areas that fall within purview of the Council. On the ninth of July, for example, it was reported that during an attack carried out by a hundred armed people on a school in a town in an African country whose situation is a matter before the Council, one child died, four others were seriously wounded and 21 were abducted. Is the Security Council, therefore, called upon to do something more in a case such as this?

I would like to conclude my statement by inviting the members of the Organization to continue the dialogue on children affected by wars. But we should remember that the time has come to think of them as peace-builders. Whenever we have discussions such as we are having today, we tend to think of children as objects, and this is appropriate when one is regarding them as innocent victims of armed conflict. However, as adults, the time has come for us to think of children as vital actors in the building of peace. Colombia will be stressing this approach at the Millennium Assembly, together with other important aspects such as the need to make the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict applicable as soon as possible.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Akasaka (Japan): Let me begin by congratulating you, Madam President, on your leadership in calling this open debate on children and armed conflict.

Japan is happy to report to you that at the Group of Eight economic summit, which successfully concluded on Okinawa earlier this week, conflict prevention was highlighted as one of the most important issues. At their meeting at Miyazaki, the G-8 Foreign Ministers compiled the G-8 Miyazaki Initiative for Conflict Prevention.

The issue of children in armed conflict is a matter of special consideration for G-8 leaders, and they agreed to take initiatives such as putting pressure on those who involve or target children in armed conflict. They also reaffirmed their commitment to human security through the creation of an environment where the dignity, well-being, safety and human rights of all people are ensured. They also agreed that the United Nations should continue to play a pivotal role in the century to come.

Almost a year has passed since the Council adopted resolution 1261 (1999), and heightened international attention to this issue has led to several encouraging developments. In this regard, I would like to commend Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other relevant international agencies, as well as civil society, for their activities that have contributed to such positive changes.

Despite these developments, however, hundreds of thousands of children still live in fear and suffer from the cruel blows that war inflicts. As was made clear at the Group of 8 summit, the plight of war-affected children is one of the most disturbing human security issues facing the world today. It is therefore gratifying to note that the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2000/712) contains concrete recommendations that will guide us in the actions we take from here on out, actions in which Japan intends to play its part.

First and foremost, I wish to emphasize the importance of conflict prevention for the protection of our children. In the open debate held in the Security Council on 20 July, Japan stressed the importance of a comprehensive approach to preventing conflicts that combines political, economic, social and humanitarian measures, and the importance of fostering a culture of prevention. For its part, Japan has engaged in a number of activities to advance a culture of prevention, such as hosting a series of international conferences on development in Africa and on the issue of small arms and light weapons, both of which indeed have an impact on children.

The two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of Child, which were long-awaited legal instruments essential to strengthening further the protection of children, were finally adopted this year. Japan participated actively in the negotiations on the consensus texts, and believes that the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict certainly gives additional legitimacy to the idea that children must not become the victims of armed conflict by being made its targets or its instruments. Now that the legal framework has been set, it is time for us to strive to realize on the ground the principles of the Optional Protocol.

Raising public awareness on the specific problems that children encounter in the course armed conflicts is also crucial to creating the international pressure necessary to halt such suffering. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce some of Japan's initiatives to support the recovery of war-affected children. The scourge of war affects the physical and emotional status of children especially deeply in post-conflict situations. As the Secretary-General has rightly pointed out in his report, the rehabilitation and education of children who are recruited as child soldiers, sexually abused, displaced or separated from their parents needs to be seen as a priority in the peace-rebuilding process. To this end, the Government of Japan has been making significant financial contributions to humanitarian programmes of United Nations agencies such as UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as well as to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). For example, in 1998 and 1999, it contributed a total of $1.8 million to projects that included support for children in Sierra Leone through the United Nations trust fund and through UNICEF. More recently, Japan has approved the release of $16 million, for financing a UNICEF project on the reactivation of quality primary education in Kosovo, from the human security fund that Japan established at the United Nations to deal with threats to human life, livelihood and dignity. In addition, on 14 July, the Government of Japan decided to extend to UNICEF a grant of $1.23 million for the purpose of assisting the smooth and successful implementation of its project to reconstruct elementary schools in East Timor.

The impact of armed conflict on children varies with the circumstances, yet the consequences are always the same: tremendous fear and pain for those who are our future. Strong political will, collective international pressure and concrete action are essential to end the most horrendous acts against children in armed conflicts. Japan reaffirms its commitment to

continue working with others on this issue on the basis of a comprehensive approach, and to create a world in which children need no longer have any fear of being children.

Finally, I would like to introduce a further initiative of Japan to protect children from another serious kind of damage. Sexual exploitation of children, such as child prostitution and pornography, not only causes serious health hazards, including unwanted pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, but also traps children in often long-term psychological traumas and deprives them of their innocence. Because of the grave concern it feels about this problem, the Government of Japan has decided to host a second World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, in cooperation with the organization known as End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT) and with UNICEF, in Yokohama from 17 to 20 December 2001. We hope that the meeting will promote the full implementation of the agenda for action adopted at the first World Congress, held in 1996, and that it will thus contribute to eradicating the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of South Africa. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Gumbi (South Africa): South Africa too would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your sterling stewardship of the Council for the month of July. Your diplomatic skills and tenacity have had a positive impact on the work of the Council.

The suffering that children experience in situations of armed conflict is unspeakable. Children who are increasingly drawn into combat as child soldiers are exposed at tender and sensitive ages to the gruesome and unbearable side-effects of war. Their fundamental human rights are violated; they are orphaned, maimed or uprooted from their families. Girl children in particular are raped and sexually abused. Ultimately, these children are left emotionally scarred and traumatized. This in turn compounds and complicates the task of working with children in post-conflict situations. It is therefore imperative that the need for special attention to protect children in United Nations peacekeeping operations be recognized by this body and that adequate training be provided on the special needs and rights of children in armed conflicts. That is of the utmost importance if we are to protect our children now and for generations to come.

It was such circumstances that compelled the Non-Aligned Movement, at its thirteenth ministerial conference in April 2000, to warmly welcome the convening of a special session of the General Assembly in 2001 to review and assess global issues affecting children, following the 1990 World Summit for Children. At this conference the ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement also expressed their deep concern about the conditions that children face on account of poverty and under-development, such as their use in armed conflict, including as child mercenaries.

At the multilateral forums, South Africa strongly supported the "straight 18" position regarding the age limit for both voluntary and compulsory recruitment set by the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We believe that this Protocol is an important step in the right direction and goes a long way in setting legal norms to address the plight of children in armed conflict situations. It is therefore important to strengthen international cooperation to ensure the implementation of the Protocol and the rehabilitation and social integration of children who are victims of armed conflict.

Furthermore, South Africa supports the provisions of the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Labour Organization Convention. These instruments deserve our full support because they offer internationally recognized recourse to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict.

At the national level, soon after the transition to democracy in 1994 the Government of South Africa took the first steps to address the demobilization, reintegration and re-socialization of children. Different institutions, including the National Youth Commission and the National Programme of Action for Children, were created. Former South African President, Mr. Nelson Mandela, established a children's fund bearing his name, to which he contributes a large portion of his own financial earnings.

On 16 July 1995 South Africa ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To ensure the Convention's implementation, the South African Government announced on 7 June 1999 its decision to amend the South African national defence policy to raise the age of enlistment into the armed forces from

17 to 18 years. In the past, a person of 17 could be recruited into the South African Defence Force, although he had to be 18 to be permitted to participate in armed conflict. This has now been amended to 18 years for recruitment as well as for active combat.

South Africa's policy now conforms with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which we signed on 10 October 1997 and ratified in January 2000. The African Charter defines a child as a person below the age of 18, and stipulates that States parties should refrain from recruiting any child into the armed forces and that no child shall take a direct part in hostilities.

All these measures are South Africa's response to the appeals for worldwide protection of children from warfare. Sadly, national initiatives alone cannot solve the problem; hence the need for enhanced international cooperation in dealing with the predicament of children in armed conflict situations. The United Nations system, especially key agencies such as the Security Council, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund, is critical in helping Governments to address and alleviate this problem.

It is for this reason that my delegation welcomes the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, as well as the convening of this debate in the Council Chamber. In the same vein, South Africa applauded the adoption of resolution 1261 (1999). In adopting this resolution, the Council took the decision to protect children exposed to war and recognized that armed conflict has long-term consequences for peace, security and development.

In conclusion, I would like to remind this body of the ground-breaking report (A/51/306) of Ms. Graça Machel to the United Nations General Assembly on the impact of armed conflict on children. In this connection, Ms. Machel stated:

> "All of us find it hard to believe that at the end of the twentieth century children are targets, children are expendable ... children are refugees, and even perpetrators in one conflict after another, on virtually every continent".

As we are entering a new millennium, the recruitment and use of child soldiers should be eliminated, since it constitutes not only an affront to human values, but also a fundamental impediment to socio-economic development. Our children have a high stake and a right to live in peace and stability.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is Mrs. Sylvie Junod, head of the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross to the United Nations. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Mrs. Junod (International Committee of the Red Cross) (*spoke in French*): I should like first of all, on behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross, to thank you, Madam President, as well as the other members of the Council, for allowing me to take the floor in this discussion of children and armed conflict. Our grave concern about this issue is part of the larger question of the protection of civilian populations which lies at the heart of the Committee's mandate. The plight of children, of all the victims of war, is undoubtedly the most tragic. They have been maimed, orphaned and separated from their kin; they have witnessed or even perpetrated unspeakable atrocities; and they have been deprived of education and traumatized for life. Entire generations and societies have mortgaged their future to pay for their terrible past.

We can no longer ignore the fact that one day a representative or one of our humanitarian colleagues, may lose his or her life because a child soldier, brainwashed or drugged, has targeted him or her. But who could have imagined even a few years ago that the Security Council would be considering such problems? Today's discussion, which follows up on the historic resolution 1261 (1999), is a hopeful sign, because it attests to the universal awareness of the urgent need for concerted action on the part of the international community to try to alleviate the consequences of war for children. In this regard, I should like to pay tribute to the vigorous, enthusiastic and tireless advocacy efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu.

Whether in its role as guardian of international humanitarian law and legal expert, or in its operational activities, the International Committee of the Red Cross has for a long time paid great attention to children during and after armed conflicts. I should like to give the Council a brief account of the efforts that we have been making in this area at the legal and operational levels, and in the context of the programme of action of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

At the legal level, the ICRC, as an expert in humanitarian law, has contributed to all the work undertaken by the conferences that have led to significant developments in international law with regard to the protection of children, from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the recruitment of children through the Ottawa Treaty to the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

I shall confine myself to a few comments on the recently adopted Optional Protocol. The formal embodiment of the prohibition on recruiting children under the age of 18 or their participation in hostilities was the most important objective. Moreover, the Protocol would have had no great meaning if it had not taken into account non-State actors. The ICRC welcomes the fact that this long-term undertaking has ultimately been successful, and we encourage States to ratify it as soon as possible.

However, the instrument is not without defects. It does not prohibit indirect participation, and it authorizes voluntary recruitment of children under 18 without defining "voluntary", leaving a loophole for abuse. Furthermore, non-State entities are bound only by a moral obligation. In this regard, it should be noted that the Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions applicable to non-international armed conflicts, ratified by 149 States, goes much further in this regard. It prohibits recruitment and participation in hostilities of children under 14, and gives the same legal obligations to parties to the conflict, whether Government authorities or armed opposition. It is also important to bear in mind that recruitment and participation in hostilities of children under 15 are classified as a war crime in the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

While legal protection of children has been greatly developed, much remains to be done with regard to ratification and implementation. The advisory services of the ICRC are available to States to assist them in developing national legislation to implement humanitarian law.

At the operational level, the specific needs of children, particularly in nutrition and health, are taken into account in assistance programmes directed at civilian populations that have suffered from armed conflict, whether they have remained in their homes or have been displaced.

In the context of protection activities for prisoners, the ICRC takes action to ensure that children are detained in places where they are separated from adults and it calls for their release whenever possible.

The ICRC's action in favour of unaccompanied children and the search for their relatives, the exchange of messages and the reuniting of families are the area in which the institution's experience is richest. Agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and non-governmental organizations are also active in this field. In the report (A/54/2000) of the Secretary-General to the Millennium Assembly there is a proposal, at the request of the International Rescue Committee, to establish a world network using a database to search for disappeared children — Child Connect. ICRC, whose working methods have evolved with the use of computerised techniques, is now studying the best way to cooperate in this initiative while retaining its approach and criteria for dealing with the constraints of situations of armed conflict.

With regard to rehabilitation and reintegration, the various entities of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement — the ICRC, the Federation and the national societies — began preparing in 1995 a programme of action for children who are victims of armed conflict. In addition to the principle of non-recruitment before the age of 18, the purpose is to take specific measures to protect and assist children, including in the rehabilitation and reintegration phase. Programmes, particularly those concerning psychological and social rehabilitation, are now being prepared by national societies, with the support of the ICRC or the Federation. The States parties to the Geneva Conventions that participate in the Movement's conferences reaffirmed their full support for the programme of action at the 27th international conference last November.

I wish in conclusion to express the fervent hope of the ICRC that significant progress will be made at the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the follow-up to the World Summit for Children, to take place next year, and which your country, Madam President, will have the honour of presiding over. The follow-up to the major conferences obliges States to present reports on their initiatives. We hope that the universal awareness of the magnitude and acuteness of the problem of the protection of children in armed conflict will give some an uneasy conscience and prompt them to take action.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Mozambique. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Santos (Mozambique): I join previous speakers in congratulating you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and the brilliant manner in which you have conducted the Council's affairs during the current month. It is fitting that you should preside over this meeting, complementing and reinforcing the excellent work that you are doing as Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the special session on children.

I also pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Jean-David Levitte of France, for the exemplary manner in which he guided the Council's work last month.

I wish to take this opportunity to express once again our profound appreciation to the Secretary-General, his Special Representative and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for their relentless efforts and dedication in bringing the issue of children in armed conflict to the centre of the Security Council's agenda as a concern of the entire world.

The adoption of Security Council Resolution 1261 (1999) lent the necessary focus to the question of children in armed conflict, as an issue with grave implications for international peace and security, deserving the unflinching commitment and dedication of Member States, regional organizations and the international community as a whole.

I commend the Secretary-General's report, which is before us as requested by resolution 1261 (1999). The report presents a lucid and comprehensive assessment of the present reality and prevailing trends with regard to children and armed conflict, and makes concrete recommendations to address the plight of children, both as victims and as instruments of violence.

The world continues to be devastated by many armed conflicts, which claim victims among children, women and the elderly. The figures in the report depict clearly the disproportionate effects of armed conflict on children. It is in recognition of this sad reality that once again the Security Council, the General Assembly and indeed the international community as a whole must extend their support to the cause of children in armed conflict. We all must join efforts, dedication and imagination in the search for ways and means to put an end to the plight of children and prevent the recurrence of similar situations.

Today's children are tomorrow's women and men. We cannot have a world of peace and prosperity if we do not spare our children today from the horrors of war, which will haunt them for the rest of their lives.

We believe that this third open debate of the Security Council and the two previous debates, as well as the work of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative and that of UNICEF, in coordination with other United Nations organs and relevant international organizations, are the right steps towards finding solutions to this global concern.

Mozambique has always expressed its commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. Today we reaffirm that commitment and pledge to continue our efforts to put an end to the suffering of millions of children in the world, mostly in Africa. It was within this context that we hosted last year a regional meeting on children in armed conflict, which produced important recommendations.

My own country lived the horrors of a prolonged war in which children were not spared. Today peace prevails in Mozambique, but great challenges still lie ahead as a consequence of the conflict. The sustainability of peace and of the reconciliation process required, and still requires, the integrated effort of all actors of Mozambican society, with the support of the international community. My Government strongly believes that success in that task lies largely in the promotion, protection and education of tomorrow's women and men — the children.

Considerable progress has been achieved in the rehabilitation and integration into society of exploited and traumatized children. However, the existence of about 2 million landmines planted during the war continues to be a major impediment to the smooth resettlement of the population and the development of productive activities. Children remain in greater danger, because they are unaware of the threat posed by anti-personnel landmines. Therefore, awareness campaigns are as important for children as demining itself. The plight of the Mozambican children has been further exacerbated by the recent unprecedented floods in the southern and central areas of the country.

We are happy to note that the process initiated by Mrs. Graça Machel, with her landmark report (A/51/306), is increasingly gaining momentum under the able guidance of Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

After almost a decade of existence, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is today a universal legal instrument, offering a solid foundation for the protection of children both in peacetime and during armed conflicts. We welcome the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in January this year. This represents an important step forward in supplementing the legal foundation for child protection. It is now high time we all moved to an era of effective implementation of these and other relevant international legal instruments, as recommended in the Secretary-General's report. Our success in the application of all relevant instruments will indeed make a difference in reducing the gap between law and practice, shaping the behaviour of parties to conflicts.

Last week the Security Council held an open meeting on the prevention of armed conflict. During that meeting it was emphasized that a continuing commitment to addressing the prevention of armed conflict in all regions of the world far outweighed the human and material costs of addressing a full-fledged conflict. In this regard, we reiterate our firm belief that a comprehensive conflict prevention strategy is ultimately the best course of action to protect children from war.

Peace is not the mere absence of war. It encompasses far more than that, requiring the demonstration of a spirit of tolerance, reconciliation and constant dialogue as a means of solving problems or differences, as well as a total rejection of violence. We believe that promoting a culture of peace today will be a valuable heritage we can bestow on future generations. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to the effective implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 1999.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the illicit exploitation of, and trade in, natural resources are among the major causes contributing to the escalation of conflicts. The cases of UNITA, in Angola, and of Sierra Leone are vivid examples of such situations. In this regard, we commend the Security Council's initiatives, and those taken by several regional and subregional organizations, to curb the illicit trade in both small arms and diamonds as preventive measures.

It is also of vital importance to undertake effective post-conflict peace-building strategies to prevent the recurrence of conflicts. In this regard, appropriate programmes should be developed — including programmes for the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation of combatants — with increased focus on the situation of child soldiers and other children affected by armed conflict. Special attention should also be given to demining as a measure to facilitate the return to normalcy and development and, above all, to spare the innocent lives of children in many parts of the world.

It is crucial to address the root causes of conflict worldwide. This daunting task demands from all of us — Governments, the United Nations system, international, regional and subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society in general — continued commitment and concerted action.

The report of the Secretary-General contains specific recommendations, some of which are already in practice. In this regard, we commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his initiative, among others, of introducing a child protection component into United Nations peacekeeping operations. We are happy to note that the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) have explicitly incorporated that component within their mandates.

We strongly support the specific recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General, and urge all other Member States to support them. We believe it is now time for all of us to lend our support and commitment to the effective implementation of these recommendation and other initiatives aimed at protecting children in armed conflict. We in Mozambique reaffirm our commitment to the cause of children by abiding by all relevant legal instruments promoting and protecting the rights of the child. We remain firmly committed to work harder in our region and subregion with other members of the

Organization of African Unity and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in translating our commitments into practice.

We must act now, and in a decisive manner, to fulfil our collective responsibilities towards children and, through them, towards all generations. We cannot afford to fail in this task, for our failure would be imposed on present and future generations. Political will is now required from all of us to face this great challenge for a better millennium where children come first in the world's agenda.

The President: I thank the representative of Mozambique for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of New Zealand. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): I join other speakers in thanking you personally, Madam President, for calling this special debate — following a similar debate last year — on the issue of children in armed conflict.

My delegation also commends the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report. Wide-ranging and innovative measures are recommended to address the problem of children and armed conflict, which we hope will receive the Council's fullest consideration. We welcome the Secretary-General's emphasis on the importance of preventing armed conflict as the principal means of protecting children from its effects.

When we met to discuss this issue last August it was clear that to enhance the United Nations central role in the protection of the world's children Member States needed to pursue progress in improving the international legal standards for the protection of children in the context of armed conflict.

The opening for signature on 25 May of the Convention on the Rights of the Child Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict is thus a very welcome development. The success of the negotiations was due in no small part to the perseverance and skill of the Chair of the Working Group, Ambassador Catherine von Heidenstam of Sweden, and we acknowledge her substantial contribution.

We believe that the Optional Protocol, once it enters into force, will be a significant addition to the protection of children's human rights. We hope that the age limit of 18 years for participation in armed conflict will become the new international standard. For the Optional Protocol to be effective, it will need to be widely ratified. We urge States to accord priority to the child soldiers issue and to work towards signature and ratification of the Optional Protocol.

Another significant step has been the conclusion of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. New Zealand is currently progressing domestic legislation that will enable it to ratify the Statute in the near future. This will include the extension of "universal jurisdiction" over war crimes, as defined in article 8 of the Statute. Once established, the Court will help end impunity for a range of war crimes, including the use of young children in armed conflict and attacks on civilian targets, such as schools, where children may be harmed.

The development of new legal standards must be supported by effective efforts in the field to ensure their implementation. In this respect, I would like to pay tribute once again to the work of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Olara Otunnu, and to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its Executive Director, Ms. Carol Bellamy. We particularly appreciated their contributions this morning. The United Nations, its agencies and its institutions can and do contribute significantly to protecting children from the effects of armed conflict and to addressing the needs of children in the aftermath of war.

One measure already instituted by the Council and which has our full support is the appointment of Child Protection Advisers in United Nations peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This initiative is a concrete example of the creative and practical means which can be employed by this Organization to address the impact of armed conflict on children.

The Secretary-General's recent report highlights the need for comprehensive measures to address the impact of armed conflict on children in all its aspects. In this respect, we support him in urging the Council to seek to minimize the unintended consequences of sanctions on civilian populations, including children, through effective targeting and humanitarian exemptions. We also support the Secretary-General's emphasis on the particular vulnerability of the girl child, on the necessity of addressing children's needs during peace processes, on the need to end impunity

for human rights violators, and on the important role non-governmental organizations can play in monitoring and minimizing the impact of armed conflict on children.

I think we would all agree that much work needs to be done to promote awareness of the impact of armed conflict on children and to encourage States to address it. Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector all have important roles to play in this process. New Zealand was pleased to be able to provide modest financial support for the Asia Pacific conference on the use of children as soldiers in Nepal in May, organized by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, a non-governmental organization. We also welcome the initiative of the Canadian Government in planning the Winnipeg international conference on war-affected children in September.

We hope that initiatives such as these, coupled with broad ratification and concerted implementation of legal standards for the protection of children such as the Optional Protocol on children in armed conflict and the Statute of the International Criminal Court, will lead to the elimination of the use of children as soldiers. In addition, the Security Council has a key role to play in addressing more broadly the impact of armed conflict on children. We welcome its continued commitment to do so.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Barbados. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Miss Clarke (Barbados): My delegation welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the debate on children and armed conflict within the context of efforts to promote a new international humanitarian order. We are particularly gratified at this opportunity to speak in this forum, and we look forward to more debates on other issues of mutual concern within the framework of the Security Council.

It is an honour for my delegation to address the Security Council under the chairmanship of Jamaica, a sister country of the Caribbean Community. This is not the first time that Jamaica has carried the baton so capably for the Caribbean and Latin American region, and indeed the countries of the South, and it will certainly not be the last.

Barbados has managed successfully to escape the ravages of war and civil strife that have afflicted and continue to destroy the societies of many of the States Members of the United Nations. Barbadian children have had the advantage of growing up in an environment of peace, political stability and relative prosperity. Our children have not had to endure the horror of being forced into warfare, the physical atrocities inflicted by landmines or the social and psychological disaffection routinely experienced by children in war-torn countries.

The question of children and armed conflict extends beyond guaranteeing the physical safety and human rights of the future citizens of the world. It speaks to the irreparable damage to the psyche of these children, to the point that they may also, in later life, repeat the atrocities to which they have been subjected. My delegation is determined that children around the world, like the children of Barbados, should enjoy the simplicity of childhood without the terror so many have sadly come to know. For this very reason, the Government of Barbados supported the establishment of the International Criminal Court as a mechanism through which children can be protected from armed conflict.

As a small island developing State with few natural resources other than its human resources, Barbados is dependent on its reputation for political stability, prudent economic management and social integrity, and gives priority to questions of human rights and social justice. We are cognizant of the special vulnerability of children in times of conflict and of the need for special measures taking their peculiar concerns into consideration.

It is the firm belief of the Government of Barbados that the United Nations should fulfil its role to prevent conflicts and not only to seek to mitigate them after they emerge. It is of grave concern to us that increasingly resources must be diverted from economic, social and infrastructural development to deal with conflicts and other crises of a humanitarian nature.

Out of respect for these very principles, the Government of Barbados signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction in December 1997. Although the Caribbean area is free from landmines, it is no comfort

to us that landmines kill or mutilate approximately 10,000 children yearly. Barbados, as a signatory to and major actor in the elaboration of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, feels compelled to assist in halting these tragic circumstances and the suffering and loss they engender. My delegation notes with some sadness the findings of the report of the April 2000 World Education Forum that the number and extent of conflicts in the last decade have constituted major obstacles to the goal of providing education for all by the year 2000.

Barbados wishes to place on record its satisfaction at the fact that the General Assembly was finally able to adopt, on 25 May of this year, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Similarly, we strenuously support the call made by the Secretary-General in his report for the international community to speak with one voice in insisting that 18 be the minimum age for participation in conflict whether in armed forces or armed groups.

As a contributing country to United Nations peacekeeping missions, Barbados pledges its support for the measures established by the United Nations to enforce standards which will instil respect of and adherence to international humanitarian law, in particular the decision to investigate thoroughly and prosecute any violations by its personnel, in violation of international humanitarian and human rights law while in the service of the United Nations. My delegation also wishes to associate itself with the proposals made by the Secretary-General for integrating the protection of children into United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Barbados wishes to recognize the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu. Thanks to his efforts, the Ministerial Negotiating Conference of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries (ACP) incorporated his proposals for protection of children into the European Union-ACP Partnership Agreement, which was recently signed in Benin. Barbados also wishes to express its commitment to the resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States last month on children and armed conflict. That resolution calls on all parties to armed conflict to respect international humanitarian law relevant to children and urges member States to support efforts to demobilize, reintegrate and rehabilitate children affected by armed conflict.

My delegation takes this opportunity to reiterate our support for the efforts of the United Nations Children's Fund, the Offices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and civil society — including such organizations as the International Committee of the Red Cross — to promote conflict prevention, to alleviate the suffering of societies at war and to promote the reintegration and rehabilitation of children involved in armed conflict.

As members are no doubt aware, the question of protection for and attention to children who are the victims of armed conflict will receive special attention when the Government of Jamaica hosts the Ministerial Meeting for the Americas later this year, in advance of the special session of the General Assembly on the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children, to be held in September 2001.

Barbados will continue to play its part by participating fully in all efforts of the United Nations to promote respect for and adherence to international humanitarian law and human rights, and the recognition of the need to protect children and to respect their rights and freedoms.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Iraq. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hasan (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to extend to you, Madam, and to the friendly delegation of Jamaica our thanks and appreciation for convening this meeting to discuss the important subject before us.

I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu; Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund; and the International Committee of the Red Cross for the important work they have been doing to protect children.

I express my special appreciation for the vigorous campaign being waged by Mr. Otunnu to end regional sanctions imposed on Burundi, given their unjust repercussions on children and families. We hope that

Mr. Otunnu will undertake a similar initiative on behalf of the children of Iraq.

Before I address the substance of the issue, I wish to emphasize that the Security Council's discussion of this issue should in no way prejudice the competence and terms of reference of the General Assembly and other United Nations organs. Given the fact that the protection of children involves a wide range of issues, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council are the appropriate forums for conducting more comprehensive and in-depth discussions of these matters.

The report of the Secretary-General and the views expressed by Member States at this meeting will undoubtedly help to identify an approach towards a more forward-looking, integrated strategy to end the suffering of children in armed conflict. While there is an urgent immediate need for modalities to alleviate the suffering of children in conflict areas and to reinforce commitments to international conventions in the area of child protection, it is equally pressing to consider a comprehensive approach to protecting children over the long term.

Perhaps the optimal way to protect children in armed conflict lies in preventing armed conflicts in the first place, containing them and addressing their root causes, foremost among which is the unstable and unbalanced international political and economic climate, which is characterized by hegemony and by a deepening divide between the States of the North and those of the South. The North has come to monopolize wealth, power, influence and technological dominance, leaving the States of the South with poverty, illiteracy, starvation, unemployment and disease. All this provides fertile ground for the growth of bigotry, violence and conflict. Thus, the United Nations has an important role to play in correcting these imbalances in the current international environment.

The indiscriminate and excessive application of sanctions by the Security Council ever since the United States achieved dominance over it in 1990 has had catastrophic consequences in several third world targeted countries. Children have been the primary victims of these sanctions. In his report on children in armed conflict before the Council, the Secretary-General has devoted a special section to the issue of protecting children from the impact of sanctions. He expressed his deep concern over the adverse impact of sanctions on children and emphasized that

> "The potential long-term benefits of sanctions should be weighed against the immediate and long-term costs to children, including the collapse of health and education infrastructures, reduced economic opportunities, increased child labour in informal sectors and increased infant morbidity and mortality. The suffering of Iraqi children, as reported by UNICEF, and of children in the Balkans are troubling cases in point." (*S/2000/712, para 25*)

The Secretary-General suggests the dispatch of evaluation missions to the targeted States and neighbouring countries prior to the imposition of sanctions with a view to assessing the potential negative impacts of sanctions. My delegation supports this recommendation and hopes that it would constitute, along with other recommendations submitted by several States, a basis for restricting the use of Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations, to keep it exclusively within the purposes of the Charter and to prevent the use of sanctions as a means of mass killing, as in the case of sanctions imposed on Iraq, sanctions which targeted the civilian population, chiefly children.

The claim by some that the suffering of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children is an unintended result arising indirectly from the sanctions is made in total ignorance of the facts on the ground and total disregard of moral values. The comprehensive sanctions imposed on Iraq were designed to kill as many Iraqi children as possible. Since they were imposed, those sanctions have not achieved any other objective except that. Let me cite the following data.

First, the comprehensive sanctions imposed on Iraq by resolution 661 (1990) of 6 August 1990 did not exclude in reality even foodstuffs and medicines. Later, children's textbooks, clothing, toys and even their coffins were excluded. Until today, the United Kingdom and the United States put on hold contracts for the acquisition of ambulances and medicines that would save the lives of children under the pretext of dual-use materials.

Secondly, five months after the imposition of comprehensive sanctions, Iraq, under the cover of Security Council resolutions, was the target of the most horrendous military aggression known in contemporary

history. A total of 88,000 tons of ordnance were dropped on Iraqi cities and villages, equivalent to seven or eight nuclear bombs similar to those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Those bombs and missiles destroyed, among other things, schools, playgrounds and hospitals for children. They also destroyed an infant-formula factory which the Americans claimed was a biological weapons factory.

Here, let me recall what was stated by the former United Nations Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Marti Ahtisaari, who visited Iraq in the wake of the aggression as head of the United Nations humanitarian needs assessment mission. In his report, in document S/22360, he stated that nothing that they had seen or read had quite prepared them for the particular form of devastation that had now befallen the country. The recent conflict had wrought near-apocalyptic results, he said, upon the economic infrastructure of what had been, until January 1991, a rather highly organized and mechanized society. Now, Mr. Ahtisaari wrote, most means of modern life support had been destroyed or rendered tenuous, and Iraq had for some time to come been relegated to a pre-industrial age, but with all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency on an intensive use of energy and technology.

Thirdly, the United States and the United Kingdom exploited the Security Council resolutions as an opportunity to test a new radioactive weapon made of depleted uranium missiles. They dropped on Iraq a total of 300 tons of this weapon of mass destruction. The use of this weapon resulted in the death of 50,000 Iraqi children in the first year. Furthermore, the use of this radioactive weapon would have a long-lasting effect on future generations in Iraq, including a higher incidence of cancer, especially leukemia among children, and fetus deformation and forced abortions. This means that the primary victims are the children of Iraq. Also, the use of depleted uranium has contributed to environmental pollution in terms of air quality, soil, water and plants. The rate of pollution has increased ten-fold over normal levels.Estimates of expenses to clean the Iraqi environment are now at some 375 billion dollars.

Fourthly, following the systematic military destruction of Iraq, comprehensive sanctions still remain. The cumulative impact of the sanctions has been on the civilian population, especially children. The field study conducted by UNICEF and issued in August 1999 emphasized that the sanctions on Iraq have resulted in the death of half a million Iraqi children under the age of five. According to the UNICEF field study, the infant mortality rates have increased from 56 per 1,000 live births during the period 1984-1989 to 131 per 1,000 in the period 1994-1999. This is in addition to the death of one million Iraqis of other age groups, especially women and elderly.

Of the children who survive, some 25 per cent suffer from chronic malnutrition. School enrolment has declined. Mrs. Rossing, the UNICEF Regional Director in Iraq, announced on 21 July 2000 that nutrition in Iraq was not a problem in the 1980s, but this problem appeared in the 1990s only.

She added that the sanctions had extensively hurt children, many of whom were forced to leave school and go on the road to earn their living, which would have a negative impact on the country's future human resources. Those facts and figures are further proof that the economic sanctions that the Security Council imposed against Iraq constitute an act of systematic genocide.

Fifthly, since 1991, the United States and the United Kingdom have been unilaterally enforcing no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq, engaging in a flagrant abuse of force against an independent State before the very eyes of the United Nations and of the entire international community. Indeed, to deflect attention from their own internal crises, they stage empty military heroics and commit military aggression against Iraq, most recently the large-scale aggression against Iraq that took place between 16 and 20 December 1998. The chief victims of the no-fly zones, the aggression and the relentless daily bombing are the children of Iraq, as has been demonstrated in reports by United Nations representatives who visited residential neighbourhoods in Iraq that had been the targets of bombing. Besides the actual bombing, the noise of supersonic military aircraft flying over Iraqi cities and villages causes panic and other psychological problems in children.

At the dawn of the new millennium, the time has truly come for the international community to wake up and reject the mind-set of imposing inhuman comprehensive sanctions, which is a legacy of the Dark Ages. That mind-set was manifested in the well-known words of United States President Woodrow Wilson:

"A nation boycotted is a nation that is in sight of surrender. Apply this economic, peaceful, silent, deadly remedy and there will be no need for force. It is a terrible remedy."

The same mind-set was also to be expressed in the words of Mrs. Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State of the United States, who famously said in 1996 that the death of half a million Iraqi children was a price that was "worth it" in continuing the sanctions against Iraq.

Drawing a distinction between combatants and civilians is a key principle of international humanitarian law. The comprehensive sanctions imposed against Iraq target civilians. The United States and the United Kingdom bear full responsibility for the genocide that is being committed in gross violation of international humanitarian law. There can be no further doubt that this principle of international humanitarian law has been materially and morally violated. The principle of permitting no impunity for those who disregard international humanitarian law must be applied. Those who target children must be brought to justice.

The Security Council, in whose name the sanctions were imposed, unquestionably lost its credibility when it agreed to lend bogus legitimacy to a scheme in which Iraqi civilians would be considered enemy targets. Because of the United States insistence on maintaining the sanctions against Iraq to attain its own vicious political objectives, and because of its constant threat to use its veto power, the Council has been rendered unable to rectify the situation and to lift the sanctions against Iraq. We would therefore expect such an initiative to come from the States of the world, which have authorized the Security Council to act on their behalf. Those States should reconsider that authorization, because we now have evidence that it has been misused to kill the children of Iraq.

The Council must be reminded that Article 25 of the Charter stipulates that the Members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the Charter. Since the imposition of comprehensive sanctions against Iraq was in contravention of the provisions of the Charter — starting with its Preamble, which stresses Members' faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person — it is the legal and moral duty of States Members of the United Nations to renounce participation in the implementation of resolutions that are inconsistent with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and that are being used to carry out a policy of genocide against the children of Iraq.

The children of Iraq, like all other Iraqi civilians, bear deep wounds on their hearts and their minds. Seven thousand Iraqi children perish each month as a result of the sanctions regime that has been imposed in the name of the Security Council. Will the Council remain silent?

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): Permit me at the outset to express my delegation's delight at seeing Jamaica presiding over yet another open debate of the Security Council on a sensitive matter critical to the well-being of children and to peace and security. The fact that you, Madam President, are also chairing the preparatory committee for the 10-year review of the World Summit for Children makes this occasion a particularly propitious one. My delegation is convinced that the outcome of these deliberations will impact positively on the outcome of the 10-year review of the Children's Summit.

This is the third consecutive year that the Security Council has held an open meeting on children and armed conflict. We are gratified to note that the Security Council has kept the children's agenda alive year after year. At last year's open meeting on this agenda item the Council adopted resolution 1261 (1999), which gave the Security Council the mandate to continue to deliberate on the matter as part of its agenda, given the relevance of this issue to international peace and security. As we meet today, the Council should be able to take stock of the commitments made in that resolution and explore what further initiatives should be taken that will enhance the security and well-being of child victims of armed conflict worldwide.

In an ideal world, wars would have been wished away and the security of all assured. Unfortunately, however, we have to contend with reality, and as we speak in this Council wars are being fought in many parts of the world, and children are not spared. It is

incumbent upon the Council, as the primary organ responsible for international peace and security, to devise, advocate and recommend ways through which the security of children in times of armed conflict will become a matter of course, and to ensure their well-being even after the hostilities have ended. The report (S/2000/712) of the Secretary-General addresses the plethora of initiatives that are required to deal comprehensively with children in situations of armed conflict. We commend the report and support many of the recommendations in it.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is by far the most comprehensive instrument on children's rights to date. The Convention has been ratified by almost all Members of the United Nations. It should therefore be the guiding beacon to all Governments in adhering to the rights of the child and should pave the way for the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and all other relevant protocols. We consider logical the suggestion that the Council should impose stiff penalties on those who perpetuate the gap between law and practice by flouting internationally agreed instruments. Having ratified the Convention in 1991, my Government is in the process of putting in place the necessary machinery for the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and the Rome Statute. But ratification on its own will not be sufficient. Ratification needs to be complemented by concrete action, the most important element of which is respect for children's rights. In this connection, my Government has gone so far as to translate the Convention into Swahili — our national language — so as to make the Convention known to all Tanzanians.

The Secretary-General's proposal that corporations develop voluntary codes of conduct concerning trade with countries or parties responsible for gross violations of children's rights is both timely and necessary. My delegation would go further and suggest that there be zero tolerance for countries found to be responsible for such violations. We hope that the Secretary-General's proposal will be concretized and accountability measures instituted to deter all those who deliberately harm or target children during armed conflict. We look forward to the conclusion of the Council's work in this respect.

Children who have been traumatized by war are psychologically and, at times, physically, scarred for life. The numbers quoted in the report of the Secretary-General compel us to sit up and examine the way we have been conducting warfare in recent times. Behind the disturbing statistics there are real people — people who represent our future. There is a compelling case for dealing with the situation of girls who have been victimized by war. It is quite evident from the Secretary-General's report that in times of war girls are invariably the most vulnerable group, as they suffer multiple abuses, such as sexual abuse, including systematic rape, sexual slavery and, in some cases, the trauma of trafficking.

Refugee children are the hardest hit because, apart from being forcibly uprooted from familiar surroundings, they lose a substantial part of their childhood, together with their rights. The phenomenon of HIV/AIDS has added another disturbing dimension to the situation: girls find themselves infected with the virus through rape. It goes without saying that the scars left by such experiences are deep and long-term. Special arrangements need to be put in place to take care of such victims if we expect them to become useful citizens who can contribute meaningfully to society when they are adults. We are encouraged by the synergy that we see building up in terms of partnerships between Governments, the international community, non-governmental organizations and civil society. These partnerships need to be commended and encouraged.

I would be remiss if I did not pay tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his work in the field. It is largely through his reports that we are now addressing in the Council the issue of children in armed conflict. We are gratified to note that, mostly because of the Special Representative's recommendation, girls in Rwanda can now inherit farms and other property. This is a significant step, taking into consideration the fact that it is girls who are mostly left to take care of their siblings when both parents have been killed in war, or have had to leave their homes. The Government of Rwanda should be commended for taking timely action in response to the recommendations of the Special Representative. We urge other countries in similar situations to follow suit.

In the same vein, we commend the Government of Sierra Leone for establishing the National Commission for War-affected Children to ensure that the needs of children and young people are taken fully into account in priority setting, resource allocation, programme planning and national policy-making. This

arrangement promises to address, in a coherent and comprehensive manner, the concerns of children affected by armed conflict.

In our statement last year, we pointed out that poverty, among other problems, lies at the root of most armed conflicts. That truism has not changed in this new century. Addressing the root causes of poverty is one of the most conclusive ways of ending the majority of armed conflicts. It is obvious that the issue of children and armed conflict is a cross-cutting one, and therefore any discussion of ending armed conflict cannot ignore the poverty dimension. It is the hope of my delegation that these issues will continue to receive the attention of the Council in a coherent and coordinated manner with a view to our finding a lasting solution to them.

I thank you, Madam President, for giving us this opportunity to address the Council.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of India. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Sharma (India): May I begin, Madam President, by congratulating you on your presidency of the Council, and by complimenting the Council on the generosity with which it suffers little children to come unto it from time to time, as it does non-members.

The tragic plight of children, whose "souls dwell in the house of tomorrow", caught up in the conflicts and savageries visited on them by their elders today, and their lives blighted and destroyed, wrings our hearts with anguish. There is a special pain in the betrayal of innocence. It gives a new and poignant meaning to the old aphorism of Francis Bacon,

> "Children sweeten labour, but they make misfortunes more bitter",

or indeed to the older Biblical prophecy:

> "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children". (*The Holy Bible, Genesis 3:16*)

Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, has won our admiration and appreciation for the total and tireless dedication with which he has embraced and pursued his mandate. The results of his efforts are in the Secretary-General's report before us. However, the report raises some questions, which I shall touch upon in a constructive spirit.

First, a question. How much does it help to discuss in isolation the problems faced by children in armed conflict? Malaria kills more children than conflicts do; AIDS will kill far more, leaving millions of other children orphaned and destitute. But we do not deal separately with children and malaria, or children and AIDS; we tackle the larger challenge, and the specific problem of children within it. The Preparatory Committee for the follow-up to the World Summit on Children, which you also so ably chair, Madam President, considers their problems in context — of society, of development, of the life-cycle of the girl child. The exception is here.

By definition, a close focus blots out the larger picture, but it is essential, in looking at a global problem, to set it in perspective. For instance, sanctions in one country alone, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), have caused 90,000 deaths a year over the last decade, and left a million children malnourished. Assuming that half the dead were children, perhaps half a million children have been killed by sanctions over the last decade — far more, barring the genocide in Rwanda, than by conflicts. But we do not have a report on children and sanctions. As a general point, therefore, a sense of balance in discussing children and armed conflict is in order.

Though in resolution 1261 (1999) the Council asked the Secretary-General for an implementation report, what we have before us is far more ambitious. Very few of its 55 recommendations have much to do with the maintenance of international peace and security, and, very properly, only a handful are addressed to the Council. On those not addressed to it, their discussion in other forums will no doubt not be pre-empted by the Council.

I shall speak only on some of those recommendations made to the Council, and on a few points in the report, starting with the claim in paragraph 1 that

> "The Security Council has now clearly acknowledged .... that the harmful impact of conflict on children has implications for peace and security."

I think the Council would agree that, while the breakdown of peace and security and the conflicts that

ensue have a tragic impact on children, there is no evidence that their plight affects international peace and security. We must soften the impact of conflict on children, and have a duty to do so, because they are innocent and should not suffer; we do not need to alarm ourselves into action by summoning up a bogey that does not exist.

The actions we take should be well thought through, pragmatic and likely to help. Many of the well-meaning recommendations are challenged by this objective. A good example is recommendation 4, the first of those addressed to the Council, which asks it to urge armed groups to accept the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol and the codes of international humanitarian law. Let us set aside for a moment the fact that none of these Conventions envisage a role for the Council in either promoting or implementing them. Let us also forget that most armed groups obey no laws, national or international, and that if they are to be tried for breaking them they must first be captured. Let us assume that the Council acts on this recommendation. Will this awe rogues into good behaviour? Perhaps in the world of Harry Potter, but not of Foday Sankoh. What then?

Targeted sanctions are the answer, according to recommendation 9, but are they? The Council can impose sanctions under Article 41 only if it has established, under Article 39, that there is a sufficient danger to international peace and security to justify them. Bear in mind, too, that only States are parties to Conventions; almost by definition, non-State actors slip through the net, or, which is almost as much of a problem, they could offer to join in order to gain a status in international law to which they are not entitled. Most importantly, the Council must bear in mind that a violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child cannot automatically be construed as a threat to international peace and security. In seeking to hold others to the rule of law, the Council must be careful not to break those that govern it.

Before acting on recommendations of this nature, the Council must take stock, as the report could have, of developments over the year that has passed since it last discussed this problem. When armed groups have shown no greater interest in abiding by law, as I think recent experience throughout the world confirms, these recommendations cannot be more than placebos.

The other feature of several recommendations is that they do not delve into the larger implications. Recommendation 6, for example, urges Member States

> "to make any political, diplomatic, financial, material and military assistance for State or non-State parties to armed conflict contingent on compliance with international standards that protect children in armed conflict."

This implies, first, that Member States should be providing such assistance to non-State parties in conflict as a matter of course, and secondly, that, if Mr. Jonas Savimbi, for instance, gave a sworn affidavit that henceforth he would only kill those above the age of 16, arms and money could again be lavished upon him. This is unintended, of course, but we have to be sensitive to the issue of legitimacy.

A third drawback in these recommendations is that, in trying to add on a qualifier about children to the general problems of conflict, to which general solutions must be found and are being sought, several end up implying, again no doubt unintentionally, that action should be taken only if children are at risk. Recommendation 38 is a case in point. Responsible States will act within their laws against those who traffic illegally in arms, currency or natural resources to inflame conflicts; they do not need the Council to ask them to do so, and they will do it to root out the generic problem, not just, as the report recommends, "where there is gross abuse and brutalization of children".

There is a lack of clarity in some recommendations. It is not clear to whom they are addressed, and the Council should resist the temptation to claim these for its own. The analysis tends to be sketchy, the mooring in facts loose. In the section on peacekeeping, for instance, we are told that two current peacekeeping operations have child protection advisers with them, but not what good, if any, they have done. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) is one of them, and experience has shown that nothing much has changed there over the last year. The report would have been useful if it had audited the mechanisms set up so far and made recommendations that built on lessons learned. This would add to the efficacy of these measures.

A number of recommendations ask the Council to take actions that are well beyond its mandate. Recommendation 10 is an example. Surely it is not for

the Security Council to ask the international corporate sector to develop codes of conduct on economic activity. The Economic and Social Council might do so, but not this Council. Others, like recommendations 41 and 42, should have been made directly to Member States rather than to the Council, which has no jurisdiction in these matters.

Recommendations 21 to 24, on internal displacement and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, ignore the fact, established once again by the difficult negotiations in the current session of the Economic and Social Council, that these Principles do not have intergovernmental approval and are not legally binding. Within countries the law of the land must prevail. International action, if any, must respect sovereignty and be at the request of the country concerned.

The import of recommendation 53 is far-reaching. India welcomes the involvement of accredited non-governmental organizations in the work of the United Nations, but which are these non-governmental organizations that the Council would consult and whose information they would take into account? How would they be chosen? Who would vet their credentials? And what would the Council plan to do with the information they provide? What is recommended here goes well beyond the parameters of non-governmental organizations' involvement in the work of the United Nations and needs to be thought through.

My very good friend Olara Otunnu, who by now I think believes that the Massacre of the Innocents should have taken place around the time I was born, could justifiably ask whether we have proposals or only a critique of his recommendations. This is what we would recommend: where armed conflicts can be stopped or curbed if strong peacekeeping operations are quickly set up, the Council must do so. Quick action saves lives, first and foremost the lives of the children, who are the most vulnerable. We sincerely admire his tireless advocacy as Special Representative and would urge him to continue with it. Spreading the word, and regularly checking if it has had any effect, is the only sure way of making progress. We wish him strength and success in this and are ready to support him in pragmatic action.

Agencies that provide humanitarian aid should be given the resources that they need, those who have the resources should contribute generously to this cause.

A number of recommendations need to be considered by other organs or bodies of the United Nations. They should do so quickly.

May I take this opportunity to thank the Permanent Representatives of Malaysia and Namibia for having taken the time out this afternoon to listen to their colleagues.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Senegal. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first of all to express to you, Madam President, our great appreciation for the Council's initiative, under your dynamic presidency, to hold a public debate on the issue of children and armed conflict. The Council's increased attention to this matter should be resolutely welcomed and encouraged.

My delegation welcomes the outstanding work carried out by the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu. My delegation is also pleased at the important campaign undertaken by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its Executive Director to end the use of child soldiers, protect children from the effects of sanctions and to draw up special codes of conduct on the rights of the child for all civilian, military and peacekeeping personnel.

It is true, as Mrs. Graça Machel noted in her 1996 report on the impact of armed conflict on children, that armed conflicts cause more deaths and injuries among children than among military personnel. According to available statistics, since the beginning of the 1990s over 2 million children have been killed and over 6 million have been wounded or maimed in the course of armed conflicts. In nearly 60 countries children are living in mine fields, and over 10,000 of them are killed or maimed every day largely due to anti-personnel landmines. Beyond these statistics, we should also take into account traumas of all types affecting children impacted by war and the impact of those traumas on them, their families and society as a whole.

Africa is paying the heaviest price in this regard as a result of the resurgence of domestic armed conflict

and regional conflicts. The situation has become even more serious with the emergence of armed bands that are different from regular armed forces. These bands are proceeding systematically and without consideration for ethnicity, morals or international norms to recruit, train and use children in hostilities, even beyond national boundaries. This situation cries out to our universal conscience, to the world's political leaders, to the international community, to the United Nations and to the Security Council in particular.

It is gratifying that this issue has been directly taken up by our Organization, which continues to call for respect for the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. My delegation therefore welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of the Optional Protocol to the Convention concerning the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Protocol demands that all States parties see to it that members of their armed forces under the age of 18 do not participate directly in hostilities and that they are not the object of obligatory recruitment.

It also raises — and it is important to emphasize this — the principle of voluntary enrolment before the age of 18, a principle that is subject to a number of strict conditions designed to guard against forced recruitment, including such recruitment by non-State armed groups.

In Africa, the question of child soldiers remains a major concern of the Organization of African Unity and of subregional organizations.

In April 2000, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held a conference in Accra, Ghana, on war-affected children, in cooperation with the Canadian Government. That conference adopted a Declaration and Plan of Action that deserve the support of the entire international community. An appeal has been launched to all Member States to respect the provisions of Security Council resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1265 (1999); the four Geneva Conventions and their Protocols; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and in particular the International Labour Organization Convention (No. 182) on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

The Accra conference drew up a set up measures dealing with the demobilization, disarmament, rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers. It also elaborated measures on education; preventive measures; measures aimed at raising the awareness of the media; and measures on early-warning systems.

Among the planned regional initiatives, I should like to emphasize here the integration of the child protection dimension in ECOWAS peace initiatives and peacekeeping operations; the appointment, within ECOWAS missions in the field, of a Child Protection Adviser; the establishment within ECOWAS of an office for the protection of war-affected children; and the establishment in all States members of ECOWAS of a West African week of truce for war-affected children. That week coincides with 16 June — the Day of the African Child — and is aimed at raising public awareness of the terrible plight of children and African children affected by war.

These regional and subregional initiatives deserve support from the United Nations system, development partners, international institutions, non-governmental organizations and other interested actors from civil society.

I am familiar with and welcome the outstanding work done by Mr. Otunnu in this area. He should be further supported, encouraged and backed by the United Nations and in particular by the Security Council.

In fact, we should give further thought to the question of the reintegration into society of child soldiers. This question, naturally, must be an integral part of post-conflict rehabilitation strategies — an area in which, it must be emphasized, United Nations action is not yet sufficiently visible and is still characterized by various weaknesses and even by reprehensible shortcomings. We must all give thought on how to cope with this issue. In that way it will be possible to avoid the resumption of conflicts and the re-emergence of hotbeds of tension that had been thought to be extinguished.

In this respect, my delegation welcomes the holding in September in Winnipeg, Canada, of an international conference on war-affected children, as well as the offer made by that country to cooperate with ECOWAS in the establishment of a unit for the protection of children. That unit would be entrusted, *inter alia*, with monitoring the status of children in conflict situations; rehabilitating and reintegrating them during the peace-building phase; and safeguarding their fundamental rights, in accordance

with the relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Peace, it has often been reiterated, is not merely the absence of war. It also means development, as many conflicts are the result of extreme poverty and underdevelopment. Therefore today more than ever it is important to find the necessary solutions to the numerous constraints that are hampering the development of Africa. Those constraints are well known. They have been recalled here on several occasions. I refer in particular to the crushing debt burden, to tariff and non-tariff obstacles to the access of African exports to the international market, and to the drastic decline in official development assistance.

All of these issues have negative repercussions on political and social crises in Africa and on the resurgence of domestic or regional armed conflicts, and therefore on the peace and stability of the African continent.

In conclusion, my delegation is hopeful that this debate will produce bold and innovative responses to the difficult question of how to protect children from the scourge of war, so that tomorrow those children, in the springtime of their lives, can be educated and trained to become active participants in the development of their countries.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Nepal. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): Yesterday, a Concorde plane on its flight to New York crashed in Paris, killing all passengers, the crew and four people on the ground. I wish to express our deep condolences to the Governments of France and Germany on this tragic accident. Our hearts go out to the families of the deceased in profound pain and sympathy.

Those most affected by this terrible disaster are the innocent children of those who died in the inferno. Many children have lost caring fathers and loving mothers. They have been orphaned by that terrible accident and now must face the sea of an uncertain future.

In many conflict-torn places, it is commonplace for children to be orphaned, maimed or killed as the grown-ups deliberately use them to make a point or to settle the score. It becomes even more horrendous when innocent children are turned into murderers. At an age when they should be carrying books in their schoolbags, children are forced to carry guns they can hardly hold, and must hide in the jungle. There are shocking instances in which the victims of conflicts turn into victimizers themselves.

This must change. Nepal is highly encouraged by this public debate, the third of its kind following those of June 1998 and August 1999. This debate is indeed a manifestation of our collective conscience and seriousness in addressing the issue of children and conflict. I express Nepal's sincere appreciation to you, Madam President, for promoting this useful deliberation.

To be sure, the international community has covered much ground in protecting children's rights and enhancing their welfare. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has already been ratified or acceded to by 191 countries. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict has been opened for signature. Security Council resolution 1261 (1999) should be praised highly as an appropriate culmination of our collective will and effort to help prevent the growing use of children as shields or as child soldiers as internecine conflicts proliferate around the world.

The Secretary-General's report presents heart-wrenching cold facts on millions of refugee children, on several thousand child soldiers and on children killed, injured, traumatized, raped and orphaned by the millions. No doubt, as the Secretary-General states,

> "children are disproportionately affected by armed conflict and their needs merit our concerted attention". (*S/2000/712*, para. 4)

Even at the dawn of the third millennium, we are witnessing much of the same. Clearly, what we have done so far is not enough. We need to do more and do it quickly. The peace and prosperity of tomorrow largely depend on our children. We must act together to provide our children with a normal, innocent childhood and the opportunity to blossom to their fullest potential. While we should redouble our endeavours to implement the globally agreed compacts and decisions for a quick turn-around in the plight of children, additional measures, as necessary, should be put in place, too. This debate contributes to that process. The implementation of international law and United Nations resolutions is always the hardest part. What we

have achieved on paper has yet to be translated into concrete improvement in the lives of billions of children.

Undoubtedly, the primary responsibility for protecting children and promoting their rights rests with the countries concerned. Prolonged armed conflicts, however, are rarely sustained without outside aiding and abetting. Nepal therefore believes in the unity of purpose and in the pooling of our efforts for complementarities and synergies to achieve our shared goal.

The question of children in conflict is an involved one. It has its political, economic and social dimensions. The treatment of the symptoms of a deeper ailment is not an appropriate response. We need to get to the root of the problem. Political exclusion, poverty and social injustice are at the root of most contemporary conflicts. We believe that the issue of children in conflict situations must be seen in its proper perspective. To my delegation, measures at the global, regional, national, community and civil-society levels are essential to moving forward in this area.

At the international level, we must continue to bridge the widening gap between the rich and the poor. Only a world marked by sovereign equality, mutual respect, non-interference and shared economic prosperity will help narrow the gulf and promote peaceful coexistence. Endeavours must also be made to constantly follow up on the implementation of the internationally agreed measures for protecting children from conflict. Early-warning systems deployed to detect signs of an evolving conflict and the prompt pre-emptive response capability of the United Nations to snuff it out before it flares up also need to be instituted. This would obviate the necessity for and impulse towards conflicts. Corollary regional efforts to promote much of the same would definitely be helpful, as they would be closer to the theatre of conflict.

Nationally, political participation and the narrowing of differences between the haves and have-nots are as called for as the imperative for social justice in order to enhance mutual understanding across racial and cultural fault lines. The implementation of international agreements designed to protect children from conflict should be the primary responsibility of each country, while the international community should exhibit its readiness to support those countries, which have difficulty managing the necessary resources.

It is at the community level that harmonious social relations can be fostered to aggregate competing priorities and claims on resources. Community organizations, together with civil society, which can work as a bridge between Governments and rebels, as well as across racial and cultural divides, should be the most effective instrument to inculcate a new culture of peace and prevention of conflicts in society. Inclusive governance, together with an expanding economy, can go a long way towards weaving together all people in tolerant mosaics on the social landscape. The challenge before us is to bring awareness to rebels and revolutionaries of the need to respect the rights of children. Civil society would be best suited to taking up such a role.

Nepal was one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our commitment to the provisions of the Convention is fully reflected in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal and in the subsequent enabling legislation to implement those pr[illegible]ons. The two Optional Protocols to the Convention are under active consideration for signing. The National Human Rights Commission has been constituted.

Ours is a tolerant society where, so far, people of different religion and ethnic origin have lived together in harmony. The multi-party system of governance offers equal opportunity to all for political participation. Being a least developed country, we need resources for both our social and economic development and our efforts to protect as well as to further promote children's rights.

I wish to share the fact that Nepal has a voluntary recruitment policy in all its uniformed services and no one under the age of 18 is sent to the front line.

Before I conclude, as I have taken the floor in the Security Council for the first time since I assumed my post as Permanent Representative of Nepal, let me congratulate you, Madam President, for successfully presiding over the Council in the month of July. I also take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his excellent report on children and armed conflict. I also congratulate Ms. Carol Bellamy for her insightful statement this morning. Mr. Olara Otunnu's lucid presentation of the report to the Council also deserves our appreciation and commendation.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Lesotho. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho): When this Council took up the issue of children and armed conflict as one of its thematic debates and subsequently adopted resolution 1261 (1999) in August 1999, it signalled the renewed international commitment to reverse the growing and tragic victimization of more than 300,000 children under the age of 18, some as young as 7, who are currently fighting in conflicts around the world, as well as thousands of others who have been recruited into armed forces and who could thus be sent into combat at any time.

Those who recruit children do not distinguish between boys and girls, both of whom are used not only to commit atrocities but also serve as sexual slaves of military commanders. Many are physically abused and driven to suicide when they cannot cope with the stressful demands put on them. Those who survive some of these harrowing experiences pose serious challenges with regard to their rehabilitation and reintegration into civilian life. What future can these children hope to have when they were denied educational opportunities and left physically and mentally scarred and disabled, thus posing a danger not only to themselves but to other children?

The time has come for the international community — this Council and other agencies — to join hands in taking appropriate measures to address the problem of the recruitment of children, particularly girls, into armed forces.

It is in this context that we welcome the opportunity to share our views on these issues and to commend you, Madam President, for your leadership of the Council during the month of July and for your efforts in arranging for this timely debate. It is particularly timely following the recent adoption by the General Assembly of two protocols — on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography — both of which are important tools in fighting the exploitation of children.

This Council's strong endorsement of the protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict will no doubt enhance international efforts aimed at curbing this scourge, which has become a feature of armed conflicts in every region of the world.

There is no doubt that international law governing the use of children as soldiers has advanced over the years. In addition to the Convention on the Rights of the Child — which, *inter alia*, defines a child as anyone below the age of 18 years — other conventions which set 18 as the age limit for recruitment and participation in conflict include the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the ILO Convention No. 182, which characterizes forced and compulsory recruitment of children under 18 as being amongst the worst forms of child labour. This Council has previously condemned targeting children in armed conflict and called for the speedy conclusion of the Optional Protocol aimed at strengthening the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

With the recent adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and the confirmation of 18 as the minimum age for participation in armed conflict, the stage has been set for this Council to take proactive measures in its areas of competence to ensure that international humanitarian standards and human rights instruments that regulate the recruitment of children as soldiers are vigorously enforced. In addition to endorsing the protocol on children in armed conflict and calling for its signature and ratification, this Council has the moral, political and legal duty to call on States to ban all recruitment of children under 18 and to require all States to put in place appropriate safeguards for proof of age and voluntarism in recruitment. No effort should be spared in rectifying the situation on the ground and ensuring that this protocol and other international humanitarian and human rights laws fulfil the purposes for which they were drafted, that is, to protect the rights of the child and to eradicate the use of children as soldiers.

What is needed is our collective effort and commitment to end the abuse of children as soldiers, to demobilize any children already serving in armed forces and to ensure their reintegration into civilian life.

This delegation is amongst those who remain particularly concerned about the plight of women and girl soldiers in armed conflict, an issue which does not seem to attract as much attention as we believe it deserves. Recently, this Council took steps to address the scourge of HIV/AIDS in general, and in particular as it relates to peacekeeping. Closely linked to this are the special needs of girl soldiers, whose role is not

limited to combat, but who in many cases are recruited primarily to perform sexual services as sex slaves or concubines.

These abuses not only result in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, but also lead to pregnancies and births of infected children and/or uncontrolled abortions. Unless the special needs of girl soldiers are recognized and concrete steps taken to address them, the girl child of today will never grow up to be a woman of tomorrow.

Resolutions of this Council should call for concrete measures to redress discriminatory policies in the armed forces, to address problems of sexual harassment and to ensure that demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes take the special needs of girl soldiers into account.

While conflict prevention is no doubt the best way to protect children, the link between poverty and the recruitment of children cannot be overlooked. A disturbing dimension of this scourge is that the majority of the most vulnerable are the poor — the least educated and the most marginalized members of society, who have either experienced abuses or have come from disrupted families either as refugees or internally displaced persons. The need for a holistic approach and for common strategies for prevention and protection, particularly in the application of international norms and standards, has thus become a priority.

To this end, the commendable efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Olaru Otunnu, and of UNICEF under its very able leader, Ms. Carol Bellamy, require this Council's full recognition and support by, *inter alia*, facilitating stronger coordination through the establishment of an inter-agency task force to undertake field visits and to prepare reports for Council debate with a view to putting countries on notice and, where necessary, naming and shaming them.

The Special Representative is to be particularly commended and supported in his efforts to open lines of communication with all the stakeholders and to impress upon them their primary responsibilities for the protection of children in conformity with international human rights and humanitarian law.

In conclusion, I wish to commend all relevant actors at the national and international levels, and in particular our partners in civil society, for their commitment to the issue of children and armed conflict. Through their experience, expertise and continued involvement, possibilities for solutions to the problem of children in armed conflict have been greatly enhanced.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Indonesia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): I should like to begin by extending the appreciation of the Indonesian delegation to you, Madam President, for convening the meeting today on the item before us, which reflects the renewed determination of the Council to protect children from the ravages of armed conflict.

My delegation also commends the Secretary-General for his timely report in document S/2000/712. It portrays a poignant picture of the devastating impact of the ongoing conflicts on children, in terms of both their magnitude and their long-term impact. It contains a series of recommendations the implementation of which will remove children from harm's way and from being deliberately targeted, in gross violation of universally accepted norms, precepts and principles.

My delegation has noted with deep concern the increasing use of children in armed conflict. It has been estimated that more than 300,000 children under the age of 18 are now being used as soldiers in conflicts in various regions of the world. Those conflicts have claimed the lives of more than 2 million children, maimed or injured 6 million, orphaned 1 million and traumatized countless others; they have resulted in children accounting for more than half of the world's 24 million refugees.

My delegation has in the past supported concerted international efforts to alleviate the suffering of children dragged into conflicts. Indonesia is a signatory of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, which upholds the political, socio-economic and civil rights of children, and it strongly supports the Optional Protocol which strengthens that Convention by calling for a minimum age of 18 for participation in hostilities. Regrettably, however, even today the recruitment and deployment of children as soldiers continues. Hence, the international community should speak with one voice and insist on 18 as the minimum acceptable age for participation in armed conflicts, which would make

a tangible difference to the fate of children exposed to danger on the ground, where more than 250,000 children under that age have taken part in more than 30 armed conflicts in various parts of the world and where children have represented 40 per cent of all victims of such conflicts.

The failure to curb the clandestine flow of small arms and light weapons across borders has taken a disproportionate toll on children in intra-State strife, and has ultimately led to greater insecurity and destabilization. The proliferation and easy availability of these arms have made it possible even for young children to become perpetrators of violence. This ominous situation calls for concerted efforts at the national, regional and global levels to curb the illicit transfer of these arms. Indonesia remains hopeful that the forthcoming United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held next year, will adopt measures that will fully take into account the interests and the protection of children.

The rights of children in armed conflicts should also be acknowledged as an explicit priority, and should be firmly entrenched in peacemaking, peace-building and conflict-resolution processes, as well as in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plans. Such a programme of assistance is critically important to consolidate peace and to support rehabilitation capacity.

The wilful denial of humanitarian assistance to children has a devastating impact on such children, who have a fundamental right to aid under international humanitarian law. Children are not only the instruments of warfare, but also its victims. They are not fully aware of the reasons for and the objectives of the armed conflicts in which they are often forced to participate. It therefore stands to reason that parties involved in conflicts should facilitate unhindered access by personnel involved in humanitarian missions to children unwittingly caught up in armed conflicts.

Landmines are indiscriminate weapons which do not distinguish between soldier and civilian, friend and foe, adult and child. It is an irony that those who suffer most are not the active combatants, but civilians, especially women and children. While demining is the only alternative for eliminating the dangers posed by landmines, effective and comprehensive mine awareness programmes focusing on children should be vigorously pursued.

Furthermore, sanctions imposed on Governments or on armed factions have a disproportionately negative impact on children in terms of weakening essential infrastructures, especially those relating to education, health and employment opportunities. While it is difficult to quantify the short-term and long-term costs for the future of children, my delegation agrees with the suggestion put forward by Malaysia, New Zealand and India, that efforts should be made to relieve the suffering of children living under sanctions regimes by providing for humanitarian exemptions so that children will not be deprived of access to basic necessities of life throughout a conflict.

In sum, the future of humanity depends on children. The use of children in armed conflicts casts a shadow on their future, for children who are exposed to violence often carry fear and hatred in their hearts and minds, which has profound long-term effects. Due to the large number of children involved in and victimized by conflicts around the world, the children's future is at stake owing to their limited opportunity to embark upon productive careers. Hence, much needs to be done to alleviate their suffering and to ensure their rightful place in their societies through adequate support programmes. The grim alternative would be a potentially serious situation if the international community failed to take timely and adequate steps to deal with this problem.

I would be remiss in my duty if I concluded this statement without commending the role played by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and by the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Ms. Carol Bellamy, who have made significant contributions to uplifting the lives of less fortunate children, for many of whom life will now be worth living. Member States are duty-bound to extend their cooperation in fulfilling the mandate entrusted to them.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Ecuador. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Alemán (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a member of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, I have first-hand knowledge, Madam President, of your indisputable talent and diplomatic skill. For

that reason, I am pleased to see you presiding over the work of the Security Council, the United Nations body that bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

I also wish to express my gratitude for the valuable and important work on the issue before the Council today by the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, and by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu.

Over the past decade, more than ever before, children have deliberately been made the innocent victims of wars and armed aggression. They have been forced or persuaded to join armies or armed groups.

On the first point, the Security Council has adopted a series of resolutions and measures on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, highlighting the need to pay special attention to the sectors of the population that are most in need: women, children and the elderly. The international community at large has also reacted positively, adopting a set of international instruments that constitute a binding legal framework, especially for safeguarding and protecting the rights of boys and girls against the reprehensible acts of violence that arise out of armed confrontation.

On the second point, the Security Council has progressed from a presidential statement to an important resolution, while the international community has adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and International Labour Organization Convention 182, concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

Minors under 18 years of age are neither mentally nor physically equipped to take part in armed conflict. Forcing them to wear a combatant's uniform harms their development and uproots them from their families and their social environment. Furthermore, it may have grave consequences for their physical and psychological health, requiring in some circumstances lengthy and costly rehabilitation processes. Adolescents enrolled in armed forces or groups cease their studies and many do not complete their secondary education. This may have a negative impact on their personal development and, indeed, on the national development of the country.

The use of child soldiers thus undermines the principles established in international law and in Ecuadorian legislation, which sets 18 as the minimum age for obtaining citizenship and for mandatory military service. There is no doubt that States, in their domestic legislation, and the Council itself, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, must take the appropriate measures, including imposing sanctions as necessary, in order to prevent businesses or individuals from taking advantage of armed conflicts to obtain economic advantages by trafficking in natural resources and small arms, which fuel conflicts, in which children are the first to be harmed.

I am certain that this discussion will prompt the Council to take a further major step forward in the ongoing humane task of preventing the participation of children in armed conflict, always taking into account the fact that their interests must take pride of place in all the decisions that relate to them. Children need to be trained to tackle the great adventure of life and not be driven into premature acquaintance with the mystery of death.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Kenya. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kuindwa (Kenya): On behalf of the Kenyan delegation, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Madam President, for convening this debate and to convey my delegation's appreciation to your predecessor, the Ambassador of France, who presided with great distinction over the Council's work for the month of June. Your own enthusiasm in presiding over the deliberations of the Security Council during the month of July gives us all reason to feel much pride and gratitude. Your personal commitment to the issue that has brought us together today is commendable.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for the report before the Security Council; Ms. Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, for her briefing; and, in particular, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, our brother Olara Otunnu, who comes from the East African region, for his most thought-provoking introductory statement. The debate that we are engaged in is of particular interest to Africa, where there is an increase in the number of atrocities to which children are subjected and, indeed, in which they participate.

We all know the statistics of those involved in armed conflicts, and the number is colossal. The proliferation of small arms and drug trafficking in the past decade, involving billions of dollars, has contributed to the escalation of these conflicts. We are living in an era of many conflicts and wars, which are used by some to achieve their own political and economic agendas. Sadly, it is women, children and families as a whole that suffer. Effective intervention that reduces and eventually eliminates the involvement of children in all forms of conflict will make a lasting impression. The report we are considering today presents a number of recommendations to address this crisis, recommendations which the Secretary-General believes fall within the ambit of this Council. My delegation would like to comment on just a few.

With regard to the normative foundation, my delegation would like to state that Kenya has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and promulgated an Act of Parliament making it effective nationally. Indeed, legislation specifically for children was adopted in the National Assembly. It is also clear to us that the Millennium Summit will provide a suitable opportunity for us to sign the Optional Protocol.

On the issue of curbing the illicit flow of arms, Kenya believes that there is an urgency to this aspect of the problem. This urgency is based on the recognition that, while the world is changing rapidly, developing countries are neither able to keep pace with the changes, nor in a position to tackle the backlog of economic injustice and social inequities. We must continue to be vigilant and become even more conscious of the danger so that children's issues are given high priority when economic and social issues are being determined.

I wish to refer to several declarations which have played a big role in addressing the issue of children and armed conflict in Africa. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has repeatedly reaffirmed the determination of the Organization to strive relentlessly towards the promotion of the rights and welfare of the child and to combat all forms of child exploitation and, in particular, to end the phenomenon of child soldiers. Heads of Government of the Commonwealth, at their meeting in Durban in November last year, strongly condemned the targeting, abuse, recruitment and deployment of children in armed conflict. Indeed, the advocacy campaign of the coalition to stop the use of child soldiers was instrumental in building worldwide momentum for reaching agreement on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. My delegation believes that all these will provide the basis for Governments to move quickly to effective action programmes, as called for in the Secretary-General's report.

The Great Lakes and Horn of Africa Conference on the Proliferation of Small Arms, held in March 2000, in which 10 countries in the region participated at the ministerial level, adopted the Nairobi Declaration, in which a number of regional cooperative measures to curb illegal small arms flows were proposed. The Declaration has been distributed as a General Assembly and Security Council document.

In conclusion, enormous challenges face mankind at the beginning of the twenty-first century, marked by deepening poverty and a widening gap between rich and poor, increasing conflict and violence, the deadly spread of HIV/AIDS and continuing discrimination, particularly against women and girls. Tremendous changes are required in societies everywhere if the vision for children, who are our future, is to be realized. We hope that the existing laws governing the participation of children in armed conflict will be reviewed to provide essential protection to these vulnerable members of society. Early-warning systems are also needed, including better ongoing monitoring and reporting, if the worst abuses are to be avoided.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, Mr. Mokhtar Lamani, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lamani (Organization of the Islamic Conference) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin my remarks by extending my sincere congratulations to you, Madam President, on presiding over this meeting. My congratulations and gratitude also go out to Ms. Louise Fréchette, the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and to Mr. Olara Otunnu for their inspiring interventions this morning.

Armed conflicts always cause suffering, above all for children and women. The adverse and lasting effects of such conflicts directly affect the possibilities for creating an environment of peace and stability. It goes without saying that the ultimate solution is to deal with the underlying causes of conflict, be they socio-economic, racial, religious or otherwise.

The report of the Secretary-General points out that children have increasingly become the victims of internal conflicts in which they are both protagonists and targets. While these children — who are the future of the international community — are covered by an array of legal instruments established by the international community to protect them, unfortunately the numerous conflicts that have broken out in various regions throughout the world in recent years have been characterized by continued violations of the fundamental rights of children and of international humanitarian law generally.

The holding of this debate today illustrates that the awareness that began to make itself felt at the beginning of the 1990s, after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, has become a genuine factor in the management of international affairs, thereby giving rise to a considerable number of measures designed to save children from the kinds of violence to which they are often subjected. New ways and means must be found, and efforts must be further intensified to avoid the worst kinds of brutality. This is why we think that the recommendations and measures designed to encourage respect for the obligations and commitments contained in the report of the Secretary-General currently before the Council must be the subject of special attention. The Security Council is the body competent to take an explicit stand to promote law and the respect for law.

Section VI of the report of the Secretary-General deals with regional initiatives on behalf of children affected by armed conflict and with the role of regional organizations. I would like in this connection first to welcome the tireless efforts of Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Secondly, I would like to stress that it is critical for regional organizations to continue to devote intensive attention to the question of children.

In this connection, the twenty-seventh Islamic Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs, which met from 27 to 30 June 2000 at Kuala Lumpur, recalled the firm positions of the members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to take necessary measures to ensure that accepted norms of conduct be better respected.

Finally, I would like to reiterate the firm and sincere desire of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to work together with other international institutions, UNICEF in particular, as well as with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to share experiences so that those experiences can be of the greatest benefit to children affected by conflict.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Nigeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation wishes to express its appreciation to you, Madam President, for convening this very important meeting on children and armed conflict. Its is essential and indeed right for the Security Council to focus on the plight of children in armed conflict in view of the recent escalation of intra-State conflicts in the different regions of the world, particularly in Africa. This meeting is also a testimony of the commitment of the Security Council, under your presidency, to intensify efforts to bring to an end the exploitation of innocent children by warlords to achieve their goals through armed conflict. It will also, one hopes, mobilize international public opinion against all those who have wrought horrendous havoc on innocent children of the world.

In the past years, the world has watched with horror the carnage of wars in the continent of Africa in which civilian populations have endured unimaginable suffering and hardship. Particularly gruesome is the image of the brutal activities of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone who blatantly offended the decency of humanity by indiscriminately cutting off the limbs of hundreds of men, women and children in the face of a helpless Government. It is sad to note that some of those who participated in committing these heinous crimes were children recruited by the various belligerent groups. Those children, between 7 and 14 years of age, are robbed of their innocence and exposed to hard drugs. They are manipulated to become the perfect killing machines. Instead of playing with toys and other children in their communities, they are armed with

AK-47 rifles. Rather than go to school, their classroom is the battlefield where they are taught to kill.

Besides the phenomenon of the child soldier, these societies are further traumatized by the horrendous injuries inflicted on these innocent children. Sierra Leone typifies an unacceptable phase of brutality in a conflict situation. How do families cope with a situation where all the children have no arms or limbs? How do communities cope with a population of armless citizens? These are very pertinent questions the Security Council and indeed the international community need to address in fashioning measures to deal with those who perpetrate these atrocities.

Another regrettable aspect of this situation is the fact that a dependency syndrome has been unwittingly created in these societies. Because these societies are ravaged by war, they are not in a position to fashion any meaningful and well-funded programme of rehabilitation. In this regard my delegation wishes to pay special tribute to non-governmental organizations, which have been very active in assisting these helpless children.

It is also necessary to commend Mr. Olara Otunu, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, for all he has been able to do to focus world attention on this unacceptable phenomenon.

Obviously, a permanent solution to this problem is the prevention of conflict. African leaders are deploying their best efforts not only to resolve the raging conflicts on our continent but also to prevent them. A major effort in this regard is being nurtured within the framework of the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDA). Its major thrust is to build African capacity for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

Since we all acknowledge that the traumatic experiences of children which I characterized earlier are unacceptable, it therefore behoves the Security Council and the international community to devise ways and means of preventing the recurrence of this phenomenon. There must be rules to protect our children in conflict or war zones from becoming instruments of war. Their involvement in wars is much more worrisome than their involvement in productive labour. The Security Council should therefore work out procedures and mechanisms for bringing the perpetrators, who must be seen as criminals, to justice. If we fail to do this in a decisive manner, we will be surrendering the future of the world's children to the whims and caprices of warlords.

The Security Council must act now.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Uganda. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mukongo Ngay (Uganda): Uganda congratulates you, Madam, for presiding over this very important open debate in the Security Council on the subject of children in armed conflict.

My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on children. We commend the Security Council for its continued engagement on issues that concern human security. We pay special tribute to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu; to the International Committee of the Red Cross; to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; to the World Food Programme; and to numerous non-governmental organizations for their continued commitment to the plight of children in armed conflict.

The adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict is one of the important milestones in the history of the United Nations. We welcome the provision which stipulates 18 to be the minimum age for participation in armed conflict. This Protocol, together with Security Council resolution 1261 (1999), are major advances in the area of children's rights and welfare.

Notwithstanding these advances, the real world, in many parts of the globe, is still full of appalling practices. Children are still used as soldiers with impunity in many countries. They are used to kill and to commit untold atrocities. They are frequently threatened with death, mutilation or injury. Girls are raped and sold as concubines.

Uganda wishes to seize this opportunity to inform the Council of the continued and tragic plight of Ugandan children who have been abducted to the Sudan. Since 1997, the rebel group based in the Sudan called the Lord's Resistance Army has abducted an

estimated 10,000 children from northern Uganda. These abductions are brutal, and many children are forced to witness the killing of family members and friends and the destruction of their homes. The Lord's Resistance Army abducts children to serve the needs of these brutal men — as child solders, as sexual slaves, as porters and as cooks.

The ongoing abduction, forced conscription and killing of children by this rebel group is one of the worst violations of children's rights anywhere in the world. It is estimated that over half of the children abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army are as young as 8 years of age. These bandits prefer young children because they are more easily manipulated, intimidated and indoctrinated than older adolescents and adults. The abductees are punished for trying to escape. They are frequently forced to beat and hack to death other children caught trying to escape. It is estimated today that as many as 8,000 children are still missing. Their parents in Uganda do not know their whereabouts. Some figures indicate that perhaps half of them have died of disease or hunger or have been killed.

The involvement of children in armed conflicts has disrupted the cultural behaviour and practices of our people, because those children are frequently sent back to their villages and districts and carry out systematic and atrocious mutilations of people, including their relatives.

In November last year, an non-governmental organization called the Leadership Council on Children in Armed Conflict issued a report on Uganda with the headline "Our Children Are Still Missing". Yes, Ugandan children are still missing in the Sudan.

During the past five years, the Government of Uganda has made many attempts to reach an agreement with the Sudanese Government. Indeed, agreements have been signed. One of them was brokered by the President of Malawi, another by Iran. This morning Mr. Olara Otunnu urged the Council to lean heavily on those countries and Governments that wantonly subject children to armed conflicts. The Government of Uganda cannot overemphasize the gravity of the failure by our neighbours to honour agreements which they have signed.

My delegation urges the Council, at the conclusion of this debate, to demand an end to the impunity of the brutal Lord's Resistance Army and to demand that the Sudan deny territory, cover and support to that group. The Council is urged to be unambiguous in its condemnation of the continued abduction of thousands upon thousands of our children.

Before I end, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the European Union for its recent resolution which condemned the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army and demanded that it be denied cover on Sudanese territory.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mukongo Ngay (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): As Jamaica nears the end of its term in the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July, my delegation believes that it is time to congratulate you, Madam, on the work you have accomplished. We are extremely honoured to take part in this important discussion, which we are certain will be successful.

We especially welcome the concern that the Security Council has always shown for the tragic plight of children affected by armed conflict. We believe that this heightened awareness will prompt the Council to propose the solutions that are required by war situations in which children are the first victims. We also welcome the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report of 19 July, issued in document S/2000/712, and the measures relating to integrating the protection of children into peacemaking and peacekeeping.

For some time now, the world has witnessed a phenomenon whose grave consequences trample on universally recognized values, namely, the tragedy experienced daily by tens of millions of children as a result of war.

Very fortunately, the international community has become aware of this tragedy. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been adopted; a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has been appointed; the International Labour Organization has adopted Convention No. 182 concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour; and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the

involvement of children in armed conflict was adopted last May.

Increasingly, protests are being heard and steps taken to put an end to the tragedy of children caught up in armed conflict. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted in July 1999, classifies the enlistment of children under 15 in national armed forces as a war crime. In its resolution 1261 (1999) of 25 August 1999, the Security Council openly urged States and all relevant parts of the United Nations system to intensify their efforts to ensure an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. It especially urged States and the agencies concerned to facilitate the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of children used as soldiers.

States are mobilizing to achieve this lofty objective and Africa has shown the way. Following the examples of South Africa and Malawi, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has long striven to make human rights the key focus of its national reconstruction police, demonstrated its determination to solve the problem of children in armed conflict. The Democratic Republic of the Congo became the third African country to establish a national plan of action pursuant to the resolution adopted at the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights.

The Congo's legal arsenal will soon be complete in terms of significant legal provisions protecting the rights of children. Through its legislative edict No. 90-048 of 21 August 1999, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has already ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is in the process of ratifying the related African Charter. It is almost ready to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was opened for signature and ratification on 5 June. It intends to ratify all pertinent instruments relating to that Convention.

I need hardly recall that, wherever countries are at war, even those that have signed all conventions relating to the rights of the child, children can be found on the front lines when they should, in theory, be found at their school desks. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is no exception to this rule. When the armed aggression against it began, 6,000 to 7,000 children were members of the government forces. However, the number enlisted in the armed groups in the East and in Equateur province is still hard to assess.

In response to this situation, the Government quickly understood that the place of children was not in the army but in their families, at school or in communities where their youth and vulnerability would be fully respected. The Government began by taking certain conservative measures to end the recruitment of children into the Congolese armed forces and to begin the process of demobilizing former combatants.

Starting with the prohibition of the recruitment of children in the armed forces, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and then assigning them tasks not involving the use of weapons and prohibiting the dispatch of minors to the front in case fighting resumed, my Government moved forward at high speed.

A truly decisive turning point was reached when, despite the ongoing state of war, the Government convened in Kinshasa, from 6 to 10 December 1999, an important forum on the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers. The main objectives of the forum were, first, to confirm the commitment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the peace process and to complying with the international conventions to which it is a party; secondly, to share the experiences of other countries in the demobilization and reintegration of minors into family and society; and, thirdly, to alert donors, partners in bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and national and international non-governmental organizations specialized in this area to the need to become heavily involved in supporting the process.

The Kinshasa forum was a total success. It enjoyed the participation of experts from several Africa, European, Asian and American countries. Delegations were present from, *inter alia*, Angola, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique and Chad for Africa; the United States of America, El Salvador and Nicaragua for America; Belgium, France and Switzerland in Europe; and Cambodia and Sri Lanka for Asia.

At the close of their work, the participants in the Kinshasa forum paid tribute to the political resolve of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to recognize the phenomenon of the child soldier and its determination to demobilize these children. They took note of the decision to establish an intergovernmental arrangement for coordinating and

addressing all aspects of demobilization and reintegration.

They also expressed the view that the demobilization of children should be included as a priority objective of any peace process and that keeping children out of wars is an act to prevent conflict and uphold human rights ideals. They called on African States to incorporate in their national legislation the principle of setting 18 as the minimum age for enlistment in their armed forces. They appealed to the international community for effective support for domestic processes to demobilize and reintegrate child soldiers, in particular in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They invited the media to launch a campaign to promote demobilization and reintegration among children themselves and in societies at large, and to refrain from broadcasting pictures and reports that could encourage children to enlist in armies.

They called on States to pay particular attention to disabled children, to so-called witch children and to children who are under the protection of the law. They encouraged reintegration, especially by returning individuals to their family units, to their jobs, to education and to training, bearing in mind the specific needs of various groups. They called on international advocacy groups to refrain from looking at the problem of child soldiers from a political standpoint and from using the phenomenon for political purposes, pointing out that this would run counter to the clear interests of the children and of human rights.

On 9 June 2000, as a culmination of all these efforts, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Laurent-Désiré Kabila, promulgated decree-law 66 on the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That law provides the Democratic Republic of the Congo with an intergovernmental coordination arrangement — or even better, with concerted action to address all aspects of the demobilization and reintegration of children who had been recruited as soldiers.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the convening of the Kinshasa forum on the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers was welcomed as a source of great hope and as a response entirely commensurate with the expectations of Congolese families and communities ravaged by the suffering and trauma of the war of aggression. If these efforts are not sustained, we are could see the dream of protecting our children vanish into thin air.

My Government appreciates the activities carried out in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by representatives of the United Nations system, especially by the country office of the United Nations Children's Fund, whose deep interest in this matter we hail. We also appreciate the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and that of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in support of Government efforts in the process of demobilizing child soldiers. We thank the humanitarian agencies for their constant assistance to refugees and those displaced by the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, of whom children constitute the most vulnerable group. But this is just one way for the United Nations to ease the effects of armed conflict on children.

If Government efforts to protect children, *inter alia* by completing the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers, are to yield the desired results, the Security Council, which bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, must shoulder its responsibilities to the full. It must rigorously apply Council resolutions that call for the total, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Ugandan and Rwandan troops from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which they are occupying in violation of the very Charter of the United Nations.

I take this opportunity to ask whether the $500 million allocated last year for victims of conflicts and natural disasters in Africa might not be of some benefit to Congolese children who have been the victims of the aggression by Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi.

I take this opportunity also to ask all cooperation and development agencies to join the action of the Congolese Government, which has led the way, and to support its efforts in the framework of the National Commission on Demobilization and Reintegration, which is mandated to carry out the successive phases of these activities both in Kinshasa and in all the provinces of our country.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Sierra Leone. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone): My delegation would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate on the issue of children and armed conflict. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his well constructed, well documented and comprehensive report. My delegation also commends Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for their perseverance and for their excellent work. We in Sierra Leone know that those two officials are a credit to our global institution.

The Security Council has clearly acknowledged that the impact of conflict on children has a variety of implications for international peace and security. The adoption of resolution 1261 (1999) gave rise to special measures aimed at the protection of children exposed to conflict, thus enhancing the political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights of the child within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We have also noted that the protection of children, especially those who have found themselves conscripted or enlisted as child soldiers, has received ample consideration and a degree of specific recognition in certain international instruments, such as the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, International Labour Organization Convention 182 of 1999 concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. In furtherance of this cause, the General Assembly has also adopted the Optional Protocol on the Convention of the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. In paying heed to the call of the Secretary-General, the Sierra Leone Parliament, on 23 May this year, ratified the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court. The instrument of ratification will soon be deposited with the Secretary-General.

In that regard, we appeal to all members of the international community to sign and ratify all instruments relating to the protection of children in armed conflict.

The question of children and armed conflict is of particular interest to my country. That phenomenon has been a tragic feature of the rebel war since it started in March 1991. Our conflict has been dubbed the "children's war" because, tragically, children were not only the victims of the armed conflict in which they were caught up, but were also perpetrators of some of the atrocities that were committed. Children are those most affected by the growing number of armed conflicts, of which they are the targets, the victims and the instruments. These children should have no part to play in armed conflicts. They need to be protected.

My delegation commends the Security Council for having adopted resolution 1306 (2000) on Sierra Leone — the resolution on diamonds — and also welcomes the resolution adopted last week, on Wednesday, 20 July, by the world's two main diamond trading associations to curb the illicit trade in conflict diamonds. Both resolutions focused on the nexus between the illicit trade in diamonds and in arms and on their joint role in fuelling some of the most brutal and devastating wars in our African continent.

My delegation agrees also with references to inadequate awareness of the extreme suffering of women and, especially, girl children, during conflicts. My Government has responded appropriately to the special needs of the girl child as well as to those of all other war-affected children in its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Educational and vocational training opportunities are to be organized and made accessible to the girl child accordingly. In April this year my Government established the National Commission for War-affected Children as a means of ensuring that the concerns and well-being of children and young people are taken fully into account in resource allocation, programme planning and national policy-making.

One of the greatest challenges facing post-conflict Sierra Leone is the crisis of young people. If former child soldiers are to become productive members of post-conflict societies, alternatives to fighting and effective programmes for their reintegration must be put in place. The Lomé Peace Agreement stipulates that particular attention be paid to the special needs of these child soldiers in the existing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to express its thanks to the troop-contributing countries, to congratulate the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone on its recent successes and to express its

heartfelt condolences to the countries and families of the wounded soldiers and those that have lost their lives.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Norway. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Larsen (Norway): The delegation of Norway would like to thank the Secretary-General for his substantive report and for the important work undertaken by Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other actors within the United Nations system. My Government supports the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report.

Norway played an active role in the drafting of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, as well as the International Labour Organization Convention (No. 182) that lists forced or compulsory recruitment of children under 18 for use in armed conflict as one of the worst forms of child labour. We are providing financial and other support to the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, which was actively engaged in promoting the Protocol. With the adoption of the Optional Protocol, our focus will now turn to obtaining support for implementing its provisions.

The Machel report helped set the stage for our policies on the protection of war-affected children during the past five years. With a view to making operational the recommendations set out in the report, Norway has assisted a variety of actors in their efforts to develop policies in this field.

We have been involved in several conferences on children and armed conflict in the past few years, including regional conferences in Africa, in 1999, and in Asia and Europe, this year, organized by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, with the objective of rallying support for the Optional Protocol and to exchange views on programming for war-affected children. At the African conference it became apparent that there is a need for closer collaboration between actors in the subregions. Together with Canada, we have taken steps to mobilize actors in the subregions. Last April Canada supported the successful conference in Accra arranged by the Government of Ghana on war-affected children in West Africa. Later this year a meeting will be held in Kampala for the Great Lakes region and the Sudan, with the support of the Norwegian Government. The focus will be on the need for closer collaboration and networking between non-governmental organizations in the field.

Norway has provided support and funding to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the follow-up of the Special Representative's visits to Guatemala, Sri Lanka and the Sudan.

My country has suggested the demobilization of child soldiers as a confidence-building measure in the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Partners Forum peace process. Preparations for such a measure are under way. UNICEF is involved in its planning.

In our humanitarian policy, we have given a prominent place to protecting children and other civilians from landmines, including the need to deal with the long-term consequences in the aftermath of conflict and war. As a follow-up to the mine ban Convention, the Norwegian Government has made a commitment to contribute the equivalent of $120 million over five years to mine action programmes.

The spread of small arms and light weapons has exacerbated inter-State and intra-State conflict, undermined political and economic development, destabilized communities and devastated the lives of millions of people. Norway has given priority to seeking pragmatic and realistic solutions to this grave problem, which affects children in many ways, as victims of and participants in hostilities. The Norwegian experience is that close cooperation among a broad set of actors is crucial if our efforts are to yield sustainable results. For our part, Norway will continue to provide support for efforts at small arms control, humanitarian assistance and reintegration programmes that benefit children, including in West Africa. We have supported the important work of Mali and others in the Economic Community of West African States on the issue of small arms. Like other speakers, Norway believes that the needs of Sierra Leone deserve the particular attention of the Council and the international donor community.

Efforts aimed at improving the plight of children in armed conflict are effective on different levels. Some of them are undertaken to protect civilians in general, others to protect children in particular. Certainly, the Machel report has played an important

role in placing the special protection of war-affected children high on the Norwegian policy agenda. Children's rights, and not least the protection of the rights of children in armed conflict, have gained increased attention. Much has been done to address actors at the international level. There is now a growing realization that in order for change to take place, subregional and local actors need to be more involved and further empowered. We are pleased that this debate confirms the willingness of the international community to continue to support action at those levels, too.

Before concluding, my delegation would like to warmly commend you, Madam President, for your personal efforts regarding children's rights and for focusing the Council on this crucial issue. This is highly valued by my Government.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Sudan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rahmtalla (Sudan): I should like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your outstanding presidency of the Council during this month. I clearly recall your outstanding chairmanship of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Children. I should also like to thank your predecessor, the representative of France, for his distinguished performance as President last month, and the French delegation for their work during the French presidency.

Sudan attaches particular interest to the question under consideration today in the Council. We have participated in all the public meetings held by the Council on the question of children in armed conflict and all other questions dealing with the subject.

Before getting to the heart of the matter, I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for his tireless and ongoing efforts to raise global public awareness regarding this issue, which threatens generations to come. In the same context, we pay tribute to the work of the Secretary-General and thank him for his report submitted to the Council and to the General Assembly on children and armed conflict.

We believe that this meeting will be followed by other meetings in the General Assembly and the specialized agencies of the United Nations to consider the report and its recommendations, so that all States Members of the United Nations will be able to take a stand on this highly important issue, which we believe is of interest to all Member States without exception.

Sudan was among the first States to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Because of the interest we attach to children, we have recently established a superior council on children that falls directly under the presidency of the Republic. We have also created a commission to put an end to the phenomenon of child kidnappings. That commission was established with the participation and support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the European Union, as well as of a number of States and national and international non-governmental organizations.

The authorities in my country are currently giving serious consideration to signing the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Sudan's signing of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines reaffirms its commitment to enable all civilians, and children in particular, to free themselves of those dangerous weapons.

The Government of Sudan has also cooperated with Mr. Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, during the course of his visits to Sudan by reaffirming its commitment not to enlist children under the age of 18 into the military or to expose their lives to danger. The Government of Sudan reaffirmed its support for the efforts made with regard to local and traditional norms and values. Those efforts will help to promote the rights of the child. My Government has also assured Mr. Otunnu of its full cooperation, a fact that Mr. Otunnu has lauded in his reports following his visits to Sudan.

My delegation would like to make a few preliminary comments on the report of the Secretary-General, which includes a number of recommendations. As we have said, those recommendations require close study by the Council and the General Assembly.

First, we welcome the recommendation that the Council work to prompt armed groups to respect standards on the protection of children, in accordance

with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol, and to respect international humanitarian law concerning the situation of children in regions of armed conflict. My country believes that armed rebel groups in Africa are directly responsible for violations of children's rights in areas of conflict. We believe the time has come to condemn such armed groups, to call things by their true names and make distinctions between the responsibilities of States, on the one hand, and those of armed groups, on the other. It is also time to put an end to violations by those groups of international and humanitarian laws.

Secondly, recommendation 53, which calls on the Council to work systematically to obtain information from non-governmental organizations regarding respect by parties to a conflict of their obligations and commitments regarding the protection of children, also says that the Council should take that information into consideration. This recommendation will take time. With all due appreciation of the important role assumed by non-governmental organizations in mobilizing the international community about situations in which children face dangers and other humanitarian problems, we also want to emphasize clearly and categorically that there have been violations of national laws by a number of non-governmental organizations working to provide humanitarian assistance. There have also been flagrant violations of principles of international and humanitarian law, as well as of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

It has been definitively proved that a great number of non-governmental organizations have participated in actions that exacerbate violence and conflict in Africa. We would like to recall what was pointed out concerning the involvement of certain non-governmental organizations in the transfer of munitions and personnel to the rebel movement in southern Sudan. That involvement incited the rebel movement to violate the humanitarian ceasefire in the Bahr El-Ghazal region and to place the lives of civilians in danger, especially those of women and children.

The Council is therefore urged, first of all, to cooperate with States and Governments in gathering information regarding respect by States of their commitments in protecting children. The Council is also asked to deal with credible and serious organizations, to consecrate the principle of transparency in its dealing with organizations, to render its opinions clearly, and to verify the truth of these violations to relevant States.

In conclusion, as we have already emphasized, the comments we have made here are only preliminary observations on the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General. We hope that report will receive all the interest it merits from all Member States when it is debated in the General Assembly. The Council needs to take into consideration the opinions of all States before taking any decision on the report. We hope that in the very near future we will once again be able to discuss the report in a detailed manner.

However, it is extremely important that the international community demonstrate real interest in finding fundamental solutions to the underlying causes of armed conflict, namely, poverty and underdevelopment. It should also seek to put an end to the suffering of children who are victims of those conflicts. People must make all efforts for sustainable development.

Finally, at this late hour, I would like to say to the representative of Uganda that what he said in his accusatory statement is unfounded. The problem in Uganda has to do with a conflict between the tribes of Uganda. President Museveni visited the country's northern region three months ago and said clearly that Sudan was not involved with Uganda's problems and that those problems stemmed from conflict and dissent within Uganda. President Museveni is therefore perfectly well aware that Sudan did not interfere in the situation in northern Uganda. As I have already said, this is a question of conflict among tribes regarding minority rule. It is an internal problem for the people of Uganda.

I would like to close by stressing that dialogue and contact between Uganda and Sudan continue to seek to remedy all the problems between the two countries. Sudan will continue to make every attempt to ensure the success of its efforts because we wish to have good-neighbourly relations with Uganda, as we have with all other neighbouring countries. We affirm here that we want to implement all African and international initiatives. I believe the representative of Uganda mentioned the Zambian and Iranian initiatives. We note that an initiative has also been launched by the Carter Centre. Very important meetings were held over a week ago at the ministerial level between Sudan and Uganda, within the framework of a dialogue for the

application of the agreements we concluded. Those meetings were held in Atlanta.

Finally, we reaffirm that differences between peoples must be settled in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, through constructive dialogue and with the necessary credibility in order to apply all these agreements.

The President: We have come to the end of our debate.

I now give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, to make brief comments. He will be followed by the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Ms. Bellamy.

Mr. Otunnu: I wish to thank very much all of the members of the Council as well as the broad membership of the United Nations, especially those that participated in this open debate. My colleagues and I have taken very careful note of all the observations and critiques that have been made. We will do our best, together with the Council, to incorporate them into the development of the mandate of the Special Representative. I very much look forward to continuing to work closely with the Council and to the outcome of this debate and of the report before the Council.

Allow me one other comment. I wish very sincerely to congratulate my very good friend Ambassador Kamalesh Sharma of India for a characteristically rigorous and brilliant critique of the mandate of the Special Representative and of the report before the Security Council. He will be happy to hear that I do not wish that the Massacre of the Innocents had taken place around the time of his birth. On the contrary, the United Nations would be so much poorer without the systematic and serious perspectives that the delegation of India brings to our discussions and dialogue. I very much regret that due to the constraint of time we cannot have a constructive dialogue on the issues he raised, but I am sure that he and I and others will find opportunities outside this Chamber to continue this dialogue.

The President: I give the floor to Ms. Bellamy.

Ms. Bellamy: We agreed that Mr. Otunnu would get two seconds and I would get one second, so I will try to keep my statement even briefer than his.

I would like to express my appreciation, on behalf of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and our colleagues in the United Nations, for the Council's leadership in taking up this issue again, for your leadership, Madam President, and indeed for the really quite impressive turnout by the many representatives who spoke today, in terms of their commitment.

I would simply say the following, apart from committing ourselves to continuing to work with the Council. The Security Council is a powerful body. The report before it contains some very important recommendations, a good number of which are appropriate to the Council. I ask the Council please not to study this report to death. As I said in my opening remarks, and as the Council is aware, childhood is quite fleeting. It does not come back, so with every moment that passes, children are moving on. The time to act is now, and we urge the Council to do so.

The President: I thank Ms. Bellamy and Mr. Otunnu for their participation in our debate today, and certainly we look forward to continuing to work with them.

I also wish to thank all of those who have participated in the Council's open debate. Their contribution will certainly enrich the Council's consideration of the item "Children and armed conflict".

The next meeting of the Security Council to continue the consideration of the item on its agenda will be fixed in consultation with the members of the Council.

The meeting rose at 7.30 p.m.